Communication Strategies Contributing to the Positive Identities of Third Culture Kids: An Intercultural Communication Perspective on Identity

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to deepen the understanding of how Third Culture Kids (TCKs) receive and maintain long-term perceptions of positive identity. The literature review surveys bodies of research related to Third Culture Kids, intercultural communication conceptions of identity, and communication strategies of identity management. The research framework is a response to Martin and Nakayama's (2010) call for a dialectical approach to the study of intercultural communication, and reflects an interpretive/critical/activist dialectic paradigm.

This qualitative multi-method research project gathered survey, interview, and visual data through online platforms. Participants were TCKs over age 40 who self-selected as having a positive identity. A modified grounded analysis revealed several key findings connected to agency development, choice making, communication filters, and framing of positivity. Factors contributing to characteristics of a positive identity included sending organization, total number and frequency of moves, and degrees of difference among their cultural contexts.

Key Words: Intercultural Communication, Identity, TCK, Qualitative, Positive Research

Dedicated to my tribe, my village, and my family

Dedicated to my TCK tribe wherever and however you live. Your melodies, fragrances, guffaws, and raw honestly have shown me that I do have a people. Andy, Kenny, Thad, Isaac, Toby, Gillian, Elise, Paul, John, Susie, and Jessica hiked, BMX biked, and laughed through childhood with me. Jimmy, Anna, Daniel Kevin, Jessica, Tammy, "Sophie", Valerie, and Margriet unknowingly guided my own journey toward a positive self-concept. And Andrew, Ari, Arie, Ellen, Emily, Ethan, Hannah, Janelle, Jed, Kohei, Lisa, Marie, Melissa, Rachel, Rebecca, and the APU TCKNetwork renewed my tribal membership in a true community.

Dedicated to the honorable elders of the Ntrubo village of Pusupu in the Volta Region of Ghana, West Africa. I send greetings to you through my brother Sylvester Nkrumah. Although I cannot send a goat for sacrifice to pay my respects, kang-karang. Thank you for what you have done. Deepest Regards, Nana Abena Ntee-ye

Dedicated to my children, Christopher Mark and Jade Christine. My little yin and yang have brought chaotic harmony to my world.

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PROLOGUE [1]

I was a scrawny, tow-headed 7-year-old tomboy in rural Minnesota when my missionary parents packed up their idealistic plans, Bible translation books, and enough clothes to sufficiently cover three kids and two adults for four years and moved us all to Africa. After six months of "Jungle Training" in a Cameroon village, we had learned how to make toys from balsa wood or tin cans, how to escape a village as army ants invaded, and how to "dash" those in power with a bribe/fee/gift, which kept systems flowing and families fed. When we flew into Accra— the capital of the Republic of Ghana— in the aftermath of a national *coup d'état*, with tanks, jungle-camouflaged military, and suspicion aimed at our airplane, we learned that changes in government can be sudden and terrifying but still be a change for good.. Eventually, we made our way to an isolated jungle village, Pusupu, where we lived simply, learned to survive, and, frequently, became laughing stocks in our attempts to adjust. For the next decade, I travelled between two worlds that were as different from each other in climate and culture as bleached Norwegian lace and vibrant Kente cloth.

Pusupu, the village where I lived with the Ntrubo people in the Volta Region of Ghana, taught me values that became a part of me. I learned to appreciate the light when I filled our kerosene lanterns, the rain when our 50-gallon water barrels ran dry, and unleveled ground when our tattered white football bounced off a mound of clay and past the goalie's fingers. I learned to treat limited resources, such as well water, medicines, and meat, as belonging to the large community of which I was a part. I was Abena, "a girl

[1] Adapted from Jung, A. (2015). "Not of this world." *APU LIFE, 28(2).*

born on a Tuesday." I picked rocks and weevils from our dinner rice. I carried water on my head from the river to our house. I danced with the women to the beat of the armpit drum and djembe. My eyes studied the ground when I greeted the elders and stared unblinking when the fetish priest's knife sacrificed blood over the village fetish.

In Pusupu, I also had white, pinch-able skin and blonde pull-able hair and was unable to ever blend in. My friends went to local school, then to farm, then to fetch firewood and water; they were too busy to play or talk with me and unable to imagine my desire to join them in their work. I was a constant curiosity prompting little faces to peer through every window or door crack. I was schooled at home using strict Mennonite curriculum with little oversight from my mother/missionary. I saw my role in the mission as a quiet babysitter for my two, then three, then four brothers and tried to stay unnoticed so my parents could focus on our reason for being there—"the work," which was language learning, creating dictionaries and primers, and translating the New Testament into Delo, the language of the Ntrubo people. My bedroom was also the nursery and medical center, my clothes were mine until they were needed by someone else, and even my Children's Bible was gifted by my father to a local pastor.

Minnesota was an entirely different world. I visited the U.S. for furloughs when I was 11, 14, and finally when I returned permanently at 17. At times, we lived in missionary or pastor housing but frequently with my paternal grandparents on a lazy river that fed into the Mississippi. I caught frogs along the Mississippi, rolled down grassy hills, suffered from tongue-on-frozen-pole and made snow angels in four layers of clothes. I learned a new set of values that also became a part of me. I learned to appreciate the efforts of caring people, no matter how horrendous the sweater turned out.

I learned to appreciate the decadence of butter—spread, melted or baked—and the versatility of Cream of Mushroom Soup. I learned to take responsibility for my own property, mistakes, and successes. I was "Amy Jones—skin and bones."

In Minnesota, I also had the missionary-barrel bellbottoms in an era of zippered ankles and remained unable to ever blend in. I attended the local schools just long enough to get through the "weird things you've eaten" and "diseases you've survived" lists, past the "hey Jane, where's Tarzan?!" and "did you ride elephants to school there?" pseudo-questions, and in time to make one good friend. I learned about being a young person, which was radically different than the Ntrubo version of life. Being back in the U.S., my role in the mission changed as well. In churches, I sang sad songs about my friends in Pusupu to raise money to save their souls; I swallowed the "Where'd you get those lame jeans?," "Geez, you're ugly," "My mom said you've got buck-teeth" taunting of the church kids so their parents would keep giving; and I mentally corrected the Sunday school teachers and youth pastors who botched the Bible but had spiritual and financial church influence. And each congregation's leaders and members explained that their church practiced the only true way of knowing and understanding God; the Lutheran church was infallible until we joined churches that were charismatic, then Evangelical Free, then Congregational. Whatever the church, it claimed that it was the authority and was not to be interrogated. My family focused on the basic importance of translating the Bible into oral languages and rarely expressed full agreement with any denomination or group. However, when our family was alone, often on a long return drive, my parents would discusses the beliefs, insights, and/or misguided faith of each and progressively encouraged their children to ask questions in the privacy of our van.

This history of navigating among diverse cultures and their associated values allows me unique, near-insider sensitivity to the lived experiences of individual Third Culture Kids (TCKs). My familiarity with terms and concerns common to many TCKs may prompt probing for deeper understandings than this population has been accustomed to revealing.

This also requires deep self-reflexivity in collecting and analyzing qualitative data because I hold multiple roles. I will forever remain a TCK; I labor as an activist for TCKs; and I am an opinionated woman who is also the "instrument" through which my participants are understood. It will be vital for me to be self-reflexive about the impact of my own life experiences on this research. Frequently, I will pair my personal responses as textual asides with relevant portions of the text; the disruptive juxtaposition of the academic and the personal may be analogous to a TCK's liminal experience of navigating between and among multiple cultural frames simultaneously.

Self-Reflexive Separation
OR
You Should Hear What I'm Thinkin'

I was describing the data to my committee when I commented on a participant's memory of boarding school.

"He had toothpaste put in is hair," I said. "Poor kid. *I was chased with stones*. I was *shunned for weeks*. Of course he thinks boarding school was fine!" A bit later I described my difficulty separating my personal experiences from my interpretations. Should my perceptions impact my analysis, And, if so, how?

Sarah Tracy, my qualitative guru, suggested separating my responses into textboxes. And so began the Textual Asides.

You *should* hear what I was thinking; the transformative power of research is revealed in my positive identity tale.

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION

The first summer after I began my doctoral program, I attended a reunion of students and staff from the isolated boarding school where I had spent my sophomore year in Cote D'Ivoire nearly two decades earlier. On the last night, everyone found a chair in the circle and offered colorful memories of the school facilities, their relationships while there, and their perspectives now on what they had experienced then. Eventually, Elizabeth Gunningham, the sunshine-faced daughter of the founders of the school began to dig through her purse while nervously explaining, "I wasn't going to share this but I think it might be appropriate. I wrote this…" she paused, breathed in deeply and began.

> "Your skin is white but your hearts are black," they said.
> "White is the color of ghosts and mourning.
> Black is the color of true people."
> Black like the panther drinking at the *marigot*.
> Black like the Christmas Pud' congealed in tropical heat.
> Black like the baby chimp orphaned by hunters.
> Black like the records thinly spinning out Souza marches.
> Black like the red road dust caked in spent motor oil.
> Black like the smoke of flesh-curing, forest-clearing fires.
> Black like the seeds of kapok snow driven on Sahel winds.
> Black like the cobra coiled by the cement cistern.
> Black like the letters dancing on the pages of our fairy tales.
> Black like Mother Antelope on Korhogo cloth.
> Black like the terrible eyes of the Witch Doctor's mask,
> And the menacing claws of the Leopard Dancers.
> Black like the sin our fathers preached from crowded pulpits.
> Black like the fetish maker's wares in the market square.
> Black like the truffles hosted by ancient tree roots
> In the foreign homelands of our parents.
> In truth, our hearts are neither white nor black.
> Our hearts are shredded between worlds:
> Shaved away, place by place, piece by piece,

Until they belong everywhere and nowhere,
And we cannot get the pieces back. (Gunningham, 2010)

As she neared the end, her voice caught and grew louder for strength. Around the oval of chairs, eyes closed, a hand reached for a neighbor's, and tissues met cheeks amid murmurs of agreement. As she sat down and slowly folded the paper, someone whispered, "thank you."

For this woman and other Third Culture Kids (TCKs) like her, experiencing a globally nomadic life during childhood can have long-term and complex impacts (Cottrell, 2002; Downie, 1976; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Useem & Cottrell, 1996). This is not to say that the experience of growing up "among worlds"[2] is the same for all TCKs. Their nations might share a border, or require a spin of the globe. The host culture or home culture[3] might seem warmly receptive or coldly hostile. And a TCK might be completely immersed in local schools or carefully isolated within an expat-only area. But when a child 1) accompanies parents in an international move for the parents' work, 2) spends a significant amount of time internationally, and 3) expects to return to the parents' home culture, they develop a peculiar sense of self, others, and the world that has long-term impacts on their adult lives (Cottrell, 1999, p. 1). There are a variety of ways TCKs experience their cultures, but, regardless of the number of moves or the distance

[2] "Among Worlds" is both a subtitle of the classic TCK text *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) and the title of a magazine for TCKs.

[3] Use of the terms host and home culture(s) are completely inadequate in referring to a TCK's geographic point of dis/connection. Other terms, such as country of birth, passport nation, ethnic origin, or overseas home, are no more adequate. Until new explanations, categories, and terms emerge and gain consensus, I ask the reader's indulgence.

they travel, TCKs develop in an international context where someone is always arriving or departing. As some have said, "the only constant is change." What makes them culturally similar is the combination of three factors experienced during child and adolescent development: global mobility, intercultural interactions, and, usually, an organizational context.[4]

Mobility may mean a single major move away and then a return, many moves between two consistent locations, frequent moves to ever-changing locations, or a variety of other combinations of home and host locations. As a result, "Americans[5] growing up overseas often come to see the United States as another foreign country, one that they visit from time to time, not their 'home.'… It should not be surprising that they develop a concept of nationality that lacks clear boundaries" (Smith, 1996, p. 190). Much of the research about TCK identity has focused exclusively on the sense of belonging to/with a nation; exploration of identity issues have been limited to their dis/connections with their home and host cultures. This research project is not about TCK national identity and, in fact, only addresses nation as it interacts with other important markers of identity.

Intercultural interactions for a TCK can include one or more home cultures, one or more host cultures, Third Culture, and a sending organization's culture—all of which impact their sense of self. "Any time children grow up among many cultural

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[4] Though many TCKs grow up with an organizational overlay, it is possible for TCKs to have their internationally mobile experience without the parents being sent by an organization. (See definition of Third Culture and Third Culture Kids this chapter.)

[5] Much of the writing about TCKs in the 1980s and 1990s was about, and for, U.S. American expatriates. As such, these writings might best be understood as products of a specific place and time that, while imperfect, generated an important new line of inquiry.

environments where they are true participants rather than just looking at the 'other' from a distance, the deeper layers of their cultural selves and identities are being formed in nontraditional ways" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 61).

For many TCKs, the organizational context is an additional complicating factor in their identity developments. Particularly for the children of military and missionary parents (Ender, 2002; Rauwerda, 2012), the label of (Military) Brat or MK (Missionary Kid) was permanently affixed, often becoming their primary identifier. Living under the daily scrutiny of a sending organization can create a heightened social awareness mixed with deeply internalized self-censoring; any slipups could cause significant and irreparable damage for themselves or others. For military kids, "every aspect of personal and private life was a measure of our fathers' [sic] professional competence" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 1), which could only have a negative impact on positions, promotions and postings. This social hypervigilance can make it feel like actions and attitudes expressed are perpetually of career or life importance.

Because of these experiences, TCKs often "learn to amputate feelings and camouflage emotions that are a natural part of separation and loss… Separation is an integral part of TCK life, and TCKs often become stuck in unresolved grief from these losses and wounds" (Gould, 2001, p. 156).

Much of the popular fiction, memoirs, and scholarly research related to TCKs over the past 50 years has sought to build a legitimate voice to cries of TCK pain and has provided compelling evidence that a TCK upbringing can be difficult and damaging (Bushong, 2015; List, 2001). Studies have identified a number of psychological disorders associated with a TCK upbringing, including depression, eating disorders, posttraumatic

stress disorder(s), and suicidal ideation, any of which can hinder attachment development, healthy marriages, and social belonging (see Cottrell 2008; List, 2001; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Useem & Cottrell, 1996).

These studies, memoirs, and other literature have provided insights into the common experiences of TCKs, including the challenges they are likely to encounter in their early- and middle-adulthoods, as well as common strengths of TCKs that might be overlooked during the same period of time. This has all led to changes in the communication to and about TCKs, and, therefore, has altered the TCK experience and opened a space for considerations of alternate TCK approaches to identity developments.

The focus of TCK identity research has been primarily around the dilemma of "who am I and where do I fit." Unlike these studies in the past that approached identity usually in terms of national identity, this research focuses on the dilemma of "how am I," as in, "how is my identity strong or positive?"

Identity development beyond nationality is a challenging process, in part because of the absence of case studies of positive role models or theories with empirical evidence of beneficial results. This study looks at individual TCKs who seem to have escaped, or made it through, the TCK identity gauntlet.

Gen-TCK
OR
Why I study TCK Identity

A college-aged TCK and I huddled quietly as the coffee shop tornado whirled around us.

"Last year was difficult." His voice trailed off as he glanced around the room. "I almost died…I OD'd"

I wanted to know "On what" and "When," but asked "Why?"

"I just don't understand anymore. Is there a place where TCKs can ever really…be?"

He's part of Gen-TCK, the new expat kids who grew up with Pollock and Van Reken books, TCK social groups, and TCK-aware parents. But his anguish and confusion were echoes of my own.

Much has changed for TCKs but the pain is still the same.

Overview of Research

This communication-based research explores the ways in which adult TCKs have defined and sustained their positive identities. To begin, this study needed a participant group able to (1) look back in time, (2) reminisce on their TCK experiences, and (3) maintain a positive identity.

Participants were ages 38–68, which means they moved internationally with their parents prior to 1985. This is significant because (1) research on this population has been primarily on their re-entry experiences not on long-term impacts, (2) most current research focuses on college or young adult experiences, (3) observational reports have suggested that for many TCKs identity issues often arise during their 30s and 40s, and (4) the experience of being a TCK changed dramatically in the 1980s. That is, post-1980 ways of travel became faster, cheaper, safer, and more comfortable; new means of communication gradually replaced postal mail *par avion* and short-wave radio; mandatory boarding schools gave way to international schools, correspondence courses, home schooling, and other educational options; the duration of time abroad shrunk from decades to one to five years per term; the ease of mobility increased the number of countries/cultures a TCK could have lived in; and, perhaps most significantly, the new concept and description of TCKs gave explanation and language for the experiences of TCKs as a "different sort of normal" (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).[6, 7]

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[6] See Appendix C for a comparison of pre-1980 and current TCK general experiences.

[7] Pollock and Van Reken's book, *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds*, was first published in 1999, but discussion of TCKs had been building. By the mid-90s, several participants of this study had heard of the concept, though minimally.

Participants self-selected as having a "positive identity," which could loosely be interpreted as a "strong or robust identity [that] tends to be associated with 'well-being' and a higher quality of life" (Simmons-Mackie & Elman, 2011, p. 313). Most research on this population examines identity difficulties; for this study a positively deviant, or "critical case," (Flyvbjerg, 2006) sample was pursued, in part, because if even TCKs who have positive identities experienced certain challenges we can be pretty confident that those challenges are experienced by all TCKs (Tracy, personal correspondence, March 30, 2016).

To make this research reflective of the greatly varied TCK experiences, a variety of sending organizations—or sectors—were represented, including religious, diplomatic, and business (Downie, 1976). And to connect with TCKs around the globe, data collection was exclusively conducted online with equal access given to individuals around the world (Lambini, 2005).

Participants reflected on key communicative moments when they received messages about who they were. These memorable messages, or interpersonal "verbal messages which may be remembered for extremely long periods of time and which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives" (Knapp, Stohl & Reardon, 1981, p. 27) provide insights into how communication has contributed to the development of TCK identities. Participants explained their perceptions of a positive identity and described the ways in which they maintained their self-concept as positive.

In short, this project focused on a selected population (TCKs over 40 with a positive identity) to locate communication impacts on TCK identity development (including memorable messages during youth) and discover communicative strategies of

positive identity development (including understandings of positive identity and strategies of maintenance). With this overview of the research project in mind, I will now summarize the communication paradigms and assumptions that guided how this research was conducted. In the following section, I explore the dialectic framework and paradigmatic intersections that undergird this project.

Dialectical Perspective and Paradigmatic Assumptions

In 1999, Martin and Nakayama presented a paradigmatic schema encompassing the existing intercultural research approaches. The four quadrants of the schema shifted the theoretical division from Functionalist/Post-Positive and Interpretive/Critical approaches to a quartet of approaches: Functionalist, Interpretive, Critical Humanist, and Critical Structuralist. The main point of their piece, however, was not to present a new categorization system, but rather to challenge the harsh lines of categorization schema and to invite a dialogue among paradigms through a dialectic framework.

This invitation to dialogue was quickly taken up as scholars enacted written dialogue across paradigms (Broome et al., 2005; Collier et al., 2002), critiqued the assumptions and limitations of intercultural scholarship based in/on Western paradigms, and offered alternative approaches, e.g., creation-centered (De La Garza, 2014), non-Western (Miike, 2010), and co-cultural groups (Orbe, 2004; Orbe & Spellers, 2005). According to Asante (2014), this dialogue and critique is necessary because, for example, an African-American experience is fundamentally its own experience; it cannot be understood by simply overlaying existing theories but must be analyzed through an Afrocentric cultural lens. Similarly, a dialectical perspective has great potential for investigating identities formed in dialectical cultural spaces (such as Third Culture) and

also for prompting interparadigmatic approaches and the potential creation/recognition of other paradigms of value to Intercultural Communication scholars. Martin and Nakayama (2010) suggest:

> [O]ur call for a dialectical perspective also means that there are many more dialectical tensions to be discussed and utilized to understand culture and communication better. Our list of some dialectical tensions was never meant to be exhaustive. Rather, we begin with a call for more work on dialectical approaches to culture and communication. (p. 75)

Therefore, in this project, I embrace a dialectical perspective and employ this approach on three levels: (1) on the paradigmatic level as a space between and among research paradigms, (2) on a theoretical level as a way to conceptualize identity, and (3) on an applied level as a way to infuse multiple voices into the dialogue of this dissertation. The main text of this manuscript is, at times, called into dialogue with my personal reflections and responses, set apart as textual asides.

First, I'd like to offer some clarity on the blend of paradigmatic assumptions that undergird this study. Epistemologically, I value an interpretive lens that acknowledges the social construction of language, culture, and knowledge but agree with critical scholars that "culture is not a benignly socially constructed variable, but a site of struggle where various communication meanings are contested within social hierarchies" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 61). Within a society, constructed understandings can be reified until they appear factual, stable, and even universal. Though notions of identity, oppression, or spirituality or ideals of freedom, equality, and protection of rights may be framed as universally experienced or totalizing themes (Foucault, 1980), I hold that they are subject to critique. I also critique the tendency to dismiss the metaphysical as a delusion of primitive cultures, the overreliance on dichotomies (such as dead/alive,

male/female, here/there, I/Thou, non/Western), and the emphasis on facts/empirics over intuition, emotion, fables, and even "fun" (Handler, 1994).

Even the location of knowledge can be understood as cognitive, and/or embodied (Conquergood, 1991), and/or metaphysical (Handler, 1994). Rather than trying to understand research as a process of "discovery," "created meaning," or "emancipation," I prefer to conceptualize the task of understanding culture somewhat like a child carrying a second-hand djembe as he approaches a weekly improvisational drum circle at the beach. In this situation, knowledge is sensory, embodied, cognitive, and potentially spiritual; the culture and its production of sound is in constant flux, as members come and go, "songs" flow into and out of existence, and histories of colonization and emancipation linger in the ocean mist. Abbott's (2004) "heuristic gambits," Murray's (1971) ways to generate "the interesting," and Tracy's "I wonder…" prompts and sensitizing questions can "open up the scene in an interesting way" (2007, p. 108).

My ontological assumptions begin with the inherent validity/worth of individuals, groups, and societies, without the necessity of outside correction, inflicted assistance, or benevolent oppression. To be human is to have choice and autonomy *and* to be simultaneously constrained and influenced by contexts and relationships. To understand what it means to be part of a culture requires researchers to examine their own patterns of being, including the relationship between the researcher and members of the culture. To understand the "nature of being" within majority-world contexts, researchers must step back from the Western academic lens (Bhawuk, 2008), attempt *verstehen* (Miike, 2010), realize that details matter (Tracy, 2007), and seek to hear "a story they tell themselves about themselves" (Geertz, 1973, p. 448). As a member of the larger TCK culture, I

approached interactions with participants with a sense of connection but not as an expert on their individual lived experiences or their standpoints. This allowed me a partial insider/partial outsider vantage point on the data and a curiosity about what makes this population unique.

My axiological reflections on ethical research are based on my epistemological and ontological assumptions. I expect that the standpoints of diverse populations will impact their understanding and value of knowledge/truth. Therefore I hold my research to be ethical only if it a) makes well-supported and tentative claims that are interesting and heuristic, b) is developed in dialogue with individuals in the population and in the academy, and c) demonstrates responsibility for the impacts of both data collection and presentation of findings on both the population and on theory development in the communication field. To be entrusted with a person's story is an honor with great expectations and a responsibility not to be treated lightly.

Beyond ethical considerations, I value research that is also positive and uplifting (Martin, personal correspondence, March 27, 2014), applied in ways that benefit the culture in ways it itself embraces (see Broome et al., 2002; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Dutta & Dutta, 2013), and active in taking up a struggle alongside others (Broome et al., 2005).

Terminology

Third Culture. "A generic term to cover the lifestyles created, shared, and learned by people who are in the process of relating their societies, or aspects thereof, to each other. The term third culture kids, or TCKs, was coined to refer to the children who accompany their parents into another society" and, therefore, into Third Culture (Useem & Cottrell 1996, p. 22). Participants in Third Culture can include expatriates and local

people, though not all expatriates and not all local people participate in Third Culture (Cottrell, personal communication). Expatriates with a sending organization have been largely assumed to be Third Culture participants because their sending organization would likely require some degree of collaborative engagement with the local people and/or other expatriates. Related terms: the expat experience, cosmopolitanism, third-space.

Third Culture Kid (TCK). An individual of any age who, because of their parents' work, spent "part or all of their childhood " (Cottrell, 1999, p. 1) in one or more "host" cultures but always with the expectation of returning to the "home" culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Useem, 2001). Key aspects of a TCK experience include mobility, crossing international cultures, and usually an organizational or sponsor context. Since Ruth Hill Useem first coined the term in the 1960s, other populations have connected their experiences with aspects of a TCK experience, which has led to the term being applied more broadly to include anyone who experiences an expatriate upbringing or domestic culture-crossings. Though the term TCK has been critiqued as inadequate, inappropriate, or unclear, there has not been consensus on a replacement term (Cottrell, 2015; List, 2001).

Adult Third Culture Kid (ATCK). An individual TCK over the age of maturity. Because ATCKs are also TCKs and because "adulthood" does not have a universal definition, I will use the term TCK to refer to individuals with this experience regardless of age.

Cross-Culture Kid (CCK). Individuals of any age whose experience as a child was deeply impacted by cross-cultural experiences and mobility (Pollock & Van Reken,

2009, Cottrell, 2012). Subsets include: TCKs, Domestically Mobile Children, Children of Non-Organizational Expatriates, Children of Minorities/Immigrants/Refugees, Bi/Multi-Cultural/Racial individuals, and others.

Expatriate/Expat. A person living outside their passport nation. This does not refer to an individual's patriotism or allegiance either for or against a nation's policies or practices.

Home/Host Culture. For this study, home culture will refer to the place(s) a TCK's parents would call home. Host culture will refer to the place(s) a TCK and/or their parents lived other than their home culture. Use of these terms is completely inadequate in referring to a TCK's geographic point of dis/connection, but other terms, such as country of birth, passport nation, ethnic origin, or overseas home, are no more adequate. What is home and what is host is largely about how that place was experienced by the TCK, not solely a matter of nationality, passport, or even past residency. When possible, a TCK's expressions of host or home will be used, rather than applying strict guidelines.

Sending Organization. Any entity responsible for relocating individuals internationally for work and providing some degree of support and/or oversight. Related terms: sector, sponsor, agency. Subsets include: military branches, church/religious organizations, state departments, international businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among others.

U.S. American. Citizens of the United States of America are often referred to as "Americans;" however, the term U.S. American will be used in this study to more accurately and respectfully differentiate between the nation and the continent (Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several populations. For scholars within the field of Intercultural Communication, this study extends the theoretical dialogue about the nature of identity. Recent work on intercultural identity has called for an increase in varied perspectives (Martin & Nakayama, 2010), transnational approaches (Asante et al., 2014), alternate markers of similarity and difference (beyond race, ethnicity, and nationality), and complex ways to explain the intersectionality of these cultural markers (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012). TCKs are able to offer several alternate markers of similarity and difference, including "home" and "host" cultures; the sending organization, corporation, or military, or the absence of such; the degree of isolation/integration within the host culture(s), and the duration of stay in these cultures. A deeper understanding of how these markers interact for TCKs can contribute to the existing postcolonial and critical approaches currently wrestling with hybridity (Bardhan, 2012), third culture (Casmir, 1999), cosmopolitanism (Sobre-Denton, 2012), and related concepts.

For researchers within the field of Intercultural Communication, this study also demonstrates a dialectical approach to communication research. In Intercultural Communication, three trends are gaining traction: "(1) a continuing critique of Western paradigmatic research traditions, (2) a burgeoning body of literature focused on postcolonial approaches within the […] critical paradigms, and (3) a growing trend of what we termed interparadigmatic borrowing, leading to a blurring of paradigmatic assumptions" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 60). This study connects and extends each of these three trends.

For TCKs and their advocates, this study joins the conversation on TCK identity struggles by presenting a framework of positive TCK identity development and maintenance strategies that connect directly to a TCK experience. This builds on research that has identified common TCK challenges. "Most research on TCKs has focused on psychological trauma, reverse culture shock, alienation, rootlessness, homelessness and lack of identity, primarily at the time of (re)entry to the home country and primarily in the teen and early adult years" (Cottrell, 1999, p. 2). This study has the potential to improve the experience of being a TCK, as well as to guide the surrounding dialogue of parents, advocates, teachers, and counselors.

For populations with points of connection to a TCK experience, this study presents communication strategies and theoretical framings with which to align or diverge. Connections to TCK experiences and characteristics have been identified with refugees and other Cross-Culture Kid (CCK) populations (Cottrell, 1999; Van Reken, 2011).

The following chapter contains a literature review and the research question that guides this study. It begins with the development of the concepts of Third Culture and Third Culture Kids, including the ways identity development of TCKs has been understood. An overview of the major conceptualizations of identity within Intercultural Communication paradigms is followed by a summary of communication strategies that might be seen in the data. The resulting research question concludes the chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Three bodies of research provide the context for this project and the structure for this chapter. A historical and interdisciplinary explanation of Third Culture and related constructs will be followed by an orientation to conceptualizations of identity within the field of communication studies, including the challenges of identifying "positive" identity. A summary of communication strategies associated with identity management will be followed by the guiding research questions for this project.

Third Culture and Related Constructs

The theory of Third Culture began within sociology and has since influenced and been explored within diverse disciplines, including psychology, education, religion, and communication studies. The development of this theory began with Western scholars observing Western groups in majority-world contexts. In the 1950s, Drs. John and Ruth Hill Useem, sociologists from Michigan State University, sojourned to India with their children and later described the culture they saw emerging through the interactions among sponsored expatriates and their host counterparts as a type of "third culture" (Useem & Cottrell, 1996).

Within the field of Communication, the notion of Third Culture was first taken up in 1999 by Fred Casmir (Hopson et al., 2012), who turned his attention to the communicative process through which this space is "built" and remodeled.

> The basic tenet in third-culture building is the deliberate development of an extended process, during which all participants gain an understanding of and appreciation for others while negotiating purposes, standards, methods, goals and eventual satisfaction in a dialogic, conversational setting…Such a result is not merely based on an attempt to achieve outcomes desired by all participants, but it

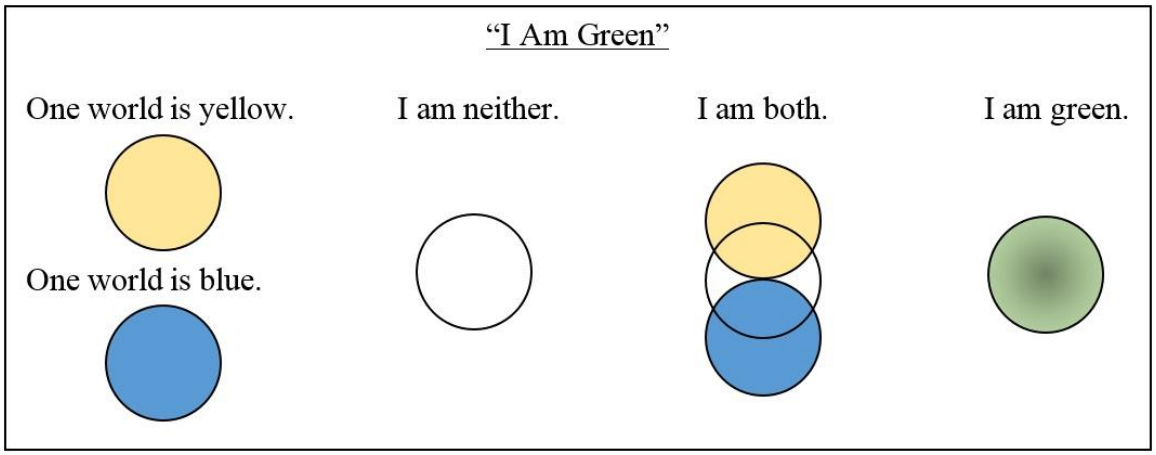
> also includes the mutual development of standards and methods for achieving those ends. A third-culture, or new interactive relationship, which thus evolves, and represents an expression of mutuality, one which can be understood, supported and defended by all participants who shared in its development. (Casmir, 1999, p. 98)

When John and Ruth Hill Useem returned from sociology research in India in the 1950s, they described the children of Third Culture expatriates as "Third Culture Kids" (Useem & Cottrell, 1996). As initially understood, this term relates to children who (1) are "from" one or more cultures (their parents' home culture), (2) spend a significant portion of their developmental years in one or more host culture (usually at least one year), (3) always expect to (re)turn to the home culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999) and (4) are under a sponsor or sending organization (Useem & Downie, 2011).

This Third Culture Kid framework found its way into non-academic gatherings and writings through the 1980s and 1990s, where the blending or hybridization of two or more cultures was the focus. Metaphors such as a chameleon and books such as "Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds" (Pollock &Van Reken, 1999) and "I Am Green" (author unknown) (see Figure 1) emphasized the blurring of the binaries of here/there, home/host, blue/yellow.[8] But it is not simply a blurring of dichotomies that makes one a TCK; Third Culture definitely collapses many binaries, crosses boundaries of nation or ethnicity (Bell-Villada & Sichel, 2012), and exists as a betweenness or liminality (Schaetti & Ramsey, 2006). This, however, is not the only

[8] This breaking of dichotomies is often resisted in a modernist, clear category framework but is a central tenet of a dialectical approach. The blurring of boundaries can be seen as negative: a zombie is both dead and alive while simultaneously neither, a transsexual is neither male nor female but both (Schnieder, 1997), and a bi-racial child is neither and both races (Fulbeck, 2009). This concept of broken binaries has been connected to liminality, borderlands, hybridity, and third spaces (see also, Footnote 10).

Figure 1.
"I Am Green." The bulk of the text from this booklet, as recalled by author.



culture contributing to a TCKs identity. TCKs negotiate themselves in and through one or more home culture and host culture, as well as spaces of Third Culture.

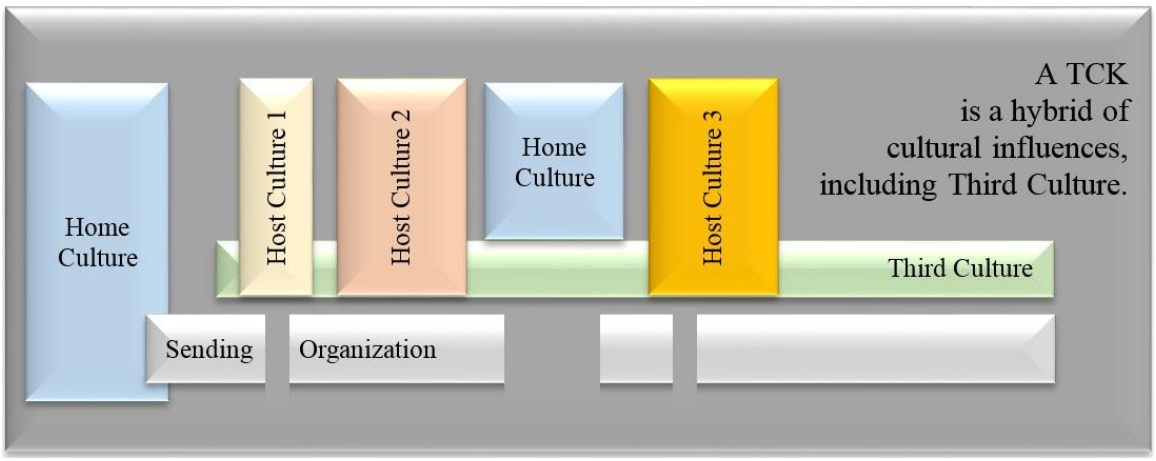
Even among TCKs significant differences shape their experiences (Schaetti & Ramsey, 2006) (see Figure 2). The most studied difference has been that of the sending organization, especially the role of a military culture (Ender, 2002; Truscott, 1989; Wertsch, 2011) and missionary culture (Atkins, 1989; Stafford, 2005; Viser, 1986; Wrobbel, 1990).

> Certainly by the time a military child is 5 years old, the values and rules of military life have been thoroughly internalized, the military identity well forged, and the child has already assumed an active stage presence as an understudy of the Fortress theater company. (Wertsch, 1991, p. 6)

Additional factors that may influence an individual TCK experience (Cottrell, 1999) include duration of stay in host culture, age at moves to and away from host culture, number of nations lived in, the degree of dis/similarity among home and hosts cultures (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005), schooling situation (including homeschool, international school, boarding school, etc.), language use (Dewaele & van Oudenhoven,

2009), the individual's personality or temperament (Weaver, 2012), political stability of the host culture (an especially salient issue for military and political TCKs), and host and home culture's perceptions of the other.

Figure 2
Cultural influences on TCK identity development.



This complexity of cultures and their associated assumptions about the "self,"[9] has been a source of confusion for many TCKs. A variety of scholars and practitioners have contributed to the understanding of the TCK experience, with much of the research identifying the impacts, symptoms, and syndromes through psychological lenses, which has given therapists and advocates tools to help TCKs develop more positive and cohesive identities (Cottrell, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

However, minimal interdisciplinary collaboration and limited access to existing research has resulted in too many studies of reentry with limited depth of analysis (Lambiri, 2005). The reliance on Eriksonian views of identity development (identity viewed as developing in predictable "set" phases), especially in the field of psychology,

[9] For a brief explanation of "the self" as culturally framed, see "Majority-world conceptualizations of identity" on page 26.

has confined much TCK identity research to a tightly structured academic lens (List, 2001). Psychological profiles and before/after reentry seminar questionnaires are valuable but might also generate more questions than answers or may create "knowledge" based on insufficient data.

The limitations of previous research have been identified by several scholars and practitioners. In 2005, Vicki Lambiri interviewed six experts on TCK issues to identify the emerging trends and research needs of practitioners and scholars, and in 2010, I co-facilitated a session with 20 TCK advocates to identify what research information would assist them in working with their specific subcategory of TCKs. Similar needs were identified by both groups, including attention to the changing face of identity, the role of the internet and new media, a deeper examination of the role of international schools, the crisis points and triggers during and after reentry/adjustment, identification of the "lost" ATCKs (those who as adults deny or ignore their international upbringing), attention to non-U.S. American TCKs, and the need for interdisciplinary research collaboration and access to existing research (Lambiri, 2005). This project contributes to varying degrees with each of these identified needs.

An intercultural communication examination of identity and the meanings internalized and expressed by TCKs long term has great explanatory and application potential. The following section will describe how communication scholars have conceptualized and studied identity, especially in the context of intercultural communication.

Intercultural Communication Conceptualizations of Identity

Intercultural communication conceptualizations of identity have primarily drawn from, and built upon, Western paradigms (Asante, 2014; Bardhan & Orbe, 2012; Kim, M-S, 2002; Kim, Y. Y., 2007). In this section, functionalist, interpretive, critical, and majority-world approaches within intercultural communication will be summarized and a dialectical perspective on identity presented. Appropriate means of understanding the nature of a positive identity conclude this section. Each approach to identity will be followed by an initial assessment of fit with a TCK experience and "wonderings" generated by that body of literature.

Functionalist Conceptualizations of Identity

Within a functionalist perspective, identity exists as a true/core self that hides under layers (Hall, E. T., 1996). This approach treats identity as unique, authentic, and discoverable (Kim, M-S, 2002).

Much of the existing research on the identity of TCKs has relied on the functionalist work of Erikson and has sought to identify consistent patterns that are valid, replicable, and generalizable (List, 2001). However, many results have been in conflict and inconclusive, in part due to the immense variation of TCKs'

"Delayed Adolescence"
OR
Monocultural Myopia

Trying to understand TCKs within a single cultural context leads to deep misunderstandings of individual TCKs. When we have identity struggles or trouble communicating clearly we are too often dismissed as immature, socially challenged, or arrogant.

This is garbage and it hurts.

We might actually "mature" earlier though it might not be a linear process. Equating my most recent intercultural mobility challenges with U.S. American teens "adolescence" is as insulting as it is misguided.

Call a spade a spade – "I'm trying to figure out, again, who I am, in this place and role."

experiences related to identity development. In "Belonging, Identity and Third Culture Kids," the authors summarize the literature in this way:

> It is difficult to draw conclusions when there is evidence of conflicting findings…There is evidence that TCKs may have a multiple sense of belonging or no sense of belonging…the literature suggests that TCKs face many challenges as their identity formation is constantly being challenged by new and changing environments. (Fail et al., 2004, p. 326)

One impact of this approach has been the labeling of TCK identity struggles in early adulthood as a "delayed adolescence," which is a problematic and potentially damaging label. To avoid overlaying universalized perceptions of identity, this research project will not utilize a functionalist perspective.

I wonder in what messages about TCK identity emerge when TCKs discuss their identity, and how those messages are explained.

Interpretive Conceptualizations of Identity

Within an interpretive lens, reality exists as a result of social interactions, and identity can only be understood or interpreted as co-created by individuals within societies. A leader in this paradigm, Goffman (1959) conceptualized human interaction as a theatrical performance, including actors, audiences, props, frontstage, and backstage, that are all understood in strips (sets of actions) and/or frames (moments of action). In this theoretical stance, knowledge is not known until it is created through a social (inter)action, and a person is not known outside of these symbolic interactions. "[S]elf-concepts are thought to be composed, in part, of role/identities... Identities are meanings one attributes to oneself in a role (and that others attribute to one)" (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, p. 84). In this perspective, a person is an agent with choice who responds to

contexts and impacts their "reality" (Cuillier & Ross, 2007; Elias & Lemech, 2009; Papachirizi, 2002; Robinson, 2007; Tracy, 2000).

As these individuals move through a society, they develop patterns that help them "manage" their performances (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). Moving through a variety of audiences or social groups, individuals develop multiple identities, including cultural identities, for which they employ different management patterns. Cultural identities, shaped by societal scripts of life, become lenses for understanding the adaptations of individuals to different interpersonal relationships and contexts. Within cultural stages, individuals manage the perceptions of their audiences by revealing preferred selves—managing the "face" others ascribe to them (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

This performance metaphor seems particularly apt for understanding TCK identity. Performing for audiences, particularly organizational audiences, is a common experience for TCKs (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). They sing in churches to raise money for "the work," play the perfect child in an organizational or host context, and work to save face for themselves or others, even hiding unsavory experiences, emotional pain, or lack of understanding from parents and the home culture (Wertsch, 2011). Adult TCKs who become authors frequently write about their lives in strips and frames of events (e.g., when his family moved to Sri Lanka) and often use photographs as a metaphor or a key artifact in their fiction stories and memoirs (Rawerda, 2012).

This performing, however, relies on fundamental "common meanings," languages, symbols, and shared interpretations understood by both the individuals and their audiences (Mendoza et al., 2002). The role of others in the construction of self is complicated for TCKs whose intimate others are often physically absent. And as TCKs

move between multiple social groups and cultures, the common meanings shift, and once-acceptable performances can become strange, shocking, or even offensive—publically holding hands with a boyfriend can be seen as normal or slutty, urinating on a tree is status quo for village life but might give Grandma conniptions, and "Wow! You are so fat we'll have to widen the doors!" can be a high compliment or an horrendous offense.

A Cold By Any Other Name
OR
Performative Rebellion

To avoid offending any social group in any language, my peers and I used local diseases as our swear words: "ma-*lar*-ia!," "*ON*-chocer-*ci*-asis," and my personal favorite, "*schi*-stosomiasis!" It's tough to explode at a child who mutters, "Ah, chickenpox! I missed my bus."

I wonder how adult TCKs look back on the messages they have received about who they are and how they should perform and what might be the long-term impacts of these messages.

Critical Conceptualizations of Identity

Within a critical perspective, identity has been situated in the struggle for resistance and emancipation from dominant groups and ideologies. Post-colonial scholars from within and outside the field of communication have critically examined the ways in which acceptance of dominant Western understandings of self can marginalize and silence minorities and formerly colonized groups (Balagangadhara & Keppens, 2009; Kramach & Uryu, 2012; Said, 1978).

In this way, "Scholars have studied identity as the dialogic site of both structural constraints and racial categorizations and identity re-makings on the part of marginalized groups" (Mendoza et al., 2002, p. 417). To critique the identity label "Oriental," Edward

Said drew on the work of Michel Foucault (1995) who challenged the idea that knowledge, power, and language could be objective, universal, and amoral.

> My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period. (Said, 1978, p. 3)

Examining the ways in which power is manifested and resisted through communication practices within this tension of constraints and identity re-makings has led to the development of theories such as Cultural Identity Theory (Collier, 2005) and Co-Cultural Theory (Orbe, 2004).

TCKs may experience powerfully censoring sending organizations, moves between colonial and postcolonial nations, and positions of varying power within those cultures. They may struggle with reconciling their experiences of both wealth and poverty, privilege and marginalization, knowledge and ignorance (Atkins, 1986). In the home culture, the TCK might lose the prestige of military associations or might be seen as socially ignorant in the culture they were previously "experts" about. "Consequently, we react

My Mom Said You're Ugly
OR
The Slippery Slope to Hell

Kids will be cruel, even in church, and kids, like me, will want to defend themselves. But by age six, I was part of my family's fundraising circus; performing songs, smiling hopefully, and squashing my pride. Any response I made would have consequences.

As a missionary kid, I had quickly realized that one verbal misstep could lose critical funding for my parents' mission. And that would be the start of the slippery slope to hell. Reduced funding could prevent my parents from bringing the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to villages of Africans, and thereby "send them to Hell." The threat of forever agony for thousands of people, kept my mouth shut.

I could not save them. I could only kill them, eternally and irrevocably. And so I sacrificed my dignity for my parents' good work.

differently. Some of us kick and scratch to get the home culture's elitist symbols. Others of us suffer with an almost pathological longing for our real homes overseas. Some of us rebel against our elitism and head for poverty" (Atkins, 1986, p. 239).

For missionary kids (MKs), resisting the power systems may be further complicated by their perception of who is the sponsor's top leader: "In other words, while military children can blame a commanding officer for their problems and a business child can blame a CEO, missionary children have no one but God" to ultimately resist or blame (List, 2001, p. 79, building on Van Reken, 1995).

I wonder in what ways TCKs accept, resist, and/or reframe the messages of control and conformity in their development of identity.

Majority-World Conceptualizations of Identity

Within the majority-world identity is often culturally framed and is therefore inherently different than Western conceptualizations. Additionally, there is no single or overarching majority-world concept of identity. The fundamental assumptions of cultures vary and, in turn, result in varied understandings of identity. "Researching identity in intercultural communication is complex since the very concept of identity, and the ways it is experienced in various cultures, tend to differ philosophically" (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012, p. xiv).

Culturally distinct approaches include an Afrocentric approach (Asante, 1987, 2014), Asiacentric approaches (Kim, M-S, 2002; Miike, 2008, 2014), an Indian approach (Chawla, 2012), and a Caribbean approach (Hall, M. L., 2007), among others. Understanding identity as culturally distinct challenges the assumption of universal notions of self.

If TCKs are understood as a distinct culture, I wonder if they agree similarly on a specific concept of identity and if there is there a cohesive "TCK approach" to identity.

Dialectical conceptualizations of identity

While the research approaches discussed so far have contributed to our understanding of cultural identity, an approach that seems particularly appropriate for this study is the dialectical. This perspective has been applied in a variety of ways that explore the dialogic space between and among interpretive, critical, and majority-world conceptualizations. Anzaldua (1987) and Conquergood (1991), in writing about boundaries and borderlands, reflected a growing awareness of, and interest in, the blurred lines between cultures, margins of societies, and points of similarity, or cultural/personal overlap. Others describe how identity experienced within these blurred areas, liminal[10] spaces, or Third Cultures (Casmir, 1990, 1999; Useem & Cottrell, 1996) might emphasize 1) the process of moving into and through changing cultural environments (Casmir, 1999; Kramsch & Uryu, 2012; Bardhan, 2012); 2) the uncertainty, paradox, and "lack of logic" (Casmir, 1990; Hecht et al., 2005; Sobre-Denton, 2012); and 3) the experience of being un/tethered or disconnected from physical places or "home" (Chen, V., 2010; Hao, 2012; Threadgold, 2000; Tolia-Kelly, 2010).

I wonder to what degree and in what ways TCKs, who grow up moving among cultures, roles, ways of thinking and homes, express their identities as liminal, paradoxical, and/or geographically untethered.

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[10] I deliberately use Victor Turner's concept of liminality as the space/time/experience that exists between stages of a ritual, in which the person is neither their previous self nor the new role/self but is within a both/and/neither space that is rich with the unexpected and uncertain.

Conceptualizing A Positive Identity

Determining the criteria for, and efficacy of, positivity in an identity can be challenging for an individual and, especially, for an observer. Some scholars, within and outside of the field of communication studies, present cultural ideals as the measure for a desired identity; "[S]ocial relationships and communicative interactions that support *autonomy* and *self-esteem* help foster a *robust* identity" (Simmons-Mackie & Elman, 2011, p. 313, italics added). For U.S. American individuals in recovery from serious psychiatric disabilities, increasing positive identity can mean moving from "illness-dominated identities to identities centered on *empowerment* and *agency*" (Mancini, 2007, p. 223, italics added). Identities may be labeled as "resilient" (Barkdull, 2009; Buzzanell, 2010), "constructive" (Bennett, 2009), or crystalized (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005) and may be valued, in part, for their movement toward cultural ideals of persistence, progress, and multi-faceted strength.

Weaving a Coat of "I Like Me!"
OR
Clinging to Shards

At a gathering of TCKs my intro cuts to the core of me.
I've been broken…shattered.
"You can still gather those pieces! Make a patchwork quilt from the patterns, textures, and colors of the cultures you've gathered."
Um, No. I say. *I can't.*
"Who says you can't? Who is telling you that you can't be whole?"
REALITY. I click the Ntrubo sound of disgust. *Parts of me were cut away, stolen from me, even destroyed. I can't get those pieces back.*
I'm seeing red; a vibrant hue. The sliver of a girl next to me is crying – she's been sacrificed, torn by stones, for…God knows what.
And why do I have to be ~whole?~ If my shards of self can be shaped into a small calabash, glued with tears and blood… I'll never be whole, but I don't need to be whole to be useful, valuable, beautiful even.

Is this positive? If I cling to my shards, am I wallowing in pain? Hurting myself? Can I like myself if I'm torn? Can I like a damaged me? Can I refuse a new, pre-assembled identity or even a glossy varnish? I wish I knew.

As noted earlier, existing research has presented TCK identity as overall rather dysfunctional and fragmented (List, 2001). As the author of the untitled poem wrote:

> In truth, our hearts are neither white nor black.
> Our hearts are shredded between worlds:
> Shaved away, place by place, piece by piece,
> Until they belong everywhere and nowhere,
> And we cannot get the pieces back. (Gunningham, 2010)

This is a common and painful expression of identity. It is not, however, necessarily negative. TCKs experience a variety of cultures, which can create a complex, and even contradictory, set of values. For TCKs, pain is not always bad and, as in the case of immunizations or a fever, may be very good for preventing hepatitis or determining that one needs treatment for malaria. Even the ending line from above, "we cannot get the pieces back" does not necessarily mean that wholeness is to be preferred. For this study, the use of the phrase "positive identity" does not imply a particular understanding of identity but allows the individuals to self-select as having a "positive identity."

I wonder how TCKs explain what this term means to them and what values they are striving for and, in doing so, reveal the identity they have about themselves.

Communication Strategies for Maintaining Positive Identity

Communication strategies include types of interactions intended to reveal, manage, perform, reframe, and resist identity. The framing of a positive identity can only be done by the individual experiencing it, and, therefore, it can take many forms. A positive identity might be one that is in line with cultural ideals, such as autonomy, confidence, and resilience, or, as in the case of TCKs, it might incorporate multiple cultural values in a way that may seem self-contradictory or even negative.

I wonder how TCKs explain their perceptions of an identity, the positive nature of their identity, and why they consider it an appropriate self-descriptor. To better understand how TCKs foster their positive identity, it is important to examine how they interpret past experiences, especially related to memorable messages. Memorable messages are interpersonal messages that are remembered for long periods of time and are perceived to have a substantial impact on how an aspect of life is led (Knapp et al., 1981). The process of remembering/forgetting can reveal underlying perspectives about the message or experience (Connerton, 2009; Davis, 2007), which makes this type of communication rich with meaning.

Memorable messages may come from one or more sources (Heisler & Ellis, 2008) and are "brief and orally delivered, personally involving and important to the recipient, apply to a variety of contexts, delivered when the recipient is receptive, and have a source that is respected and/or of higher status (Knapp et al., 1981, p. 125–126). Contrary to intuition, some studies have suggested that these messages are also more likely to be positive than negative (Stohl, 1986) and attributed to benevolent intentions of the source of the message (Knapp et al., 1981).

I wonder what memorable messages are recalled by TCKs, understood today, and how the process of remembering and forgetting is in/consistent and smooth or choppy.

Other communication strategies of identity maintenance might prove relevant as well. These might include: reaffirming, reframing, or resisting the identities assigned by others; revealing/hiding information during introductions; storytelling as a performance of un/acceptable identities (Kellas, 2005); or metaphor as a narrative shorthand (Bell-Villada & Sitchel, 2012). Management of identity may take the form of resistance, such

as “resisting labels and constraints through noncompliance, advocating for similar others” (Mancini, 2007), or avoiding or resisting an imposed identity with humor (Tracy, 2006).

I wonder what TCKs, who have managed their identities across cultures and over time, may have discovered, by trial and error, about specific communication strategies and their impact on maintaining a positive identity.

With this understanding of the literature foundational to this study, I offer the following research question.

Research Question

RQ: What communication strategies emerge as salient when Third Culture Kids talk about maintaining their positive identity?

With this guiding question in place, I will summarize the methods of research that generated appropriate data to begin shading in these gaps in the understanding of TCKs and of intercultural communication identity.[11]

[11] To be clear then, this study will not attempt to evaluate the legitimacy of a participants "positivity," nor will this project evaluate the relative worth of participants’ strategies.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Interpretive, critical, and dialectical approaches to communication, in which culturally and socially situated researchers attempt to discern meanings within human communication, seek depth of data for the purpose of better understanding and improving human relationships within societies (see Conquergood, 1991; Glaser, 1978; Martin & Nakayama, 2010; Tracy, 2013). Qualitative methods attempt complex understandings by focusing attention on the qualities and characteristics of interactions and the meanings those messages hold for the participants. An emic approach, which begins with the data rather than starting with a theory, paired with an iterative, or cyclical, process of shuffling among the data, existing theory, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12, Tracy, 2013) can encourage *verstehen* (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) and, for this project, bring the researcher closer to understanding participants' perceptions of their cultural identities.

A Dance of Research and Roles

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher becomes the "instrument" through which the participants are examined and the language through which they are conveyed. Self-reflexivity, then, becomes an important aspect of data collection and analysis. At the start of this project, I also met most of the criteria for participation, and by the end, I could have qualified completely. I am also an educator who offers support and counsel for young adult TCKs. The qualitative, applied, and personal natures of this study made it both necessary and unavoidable for me to deeply and repeatedly examine my roles.

It also became necessary for me to be self-reflexive about the impact of my own life experiences on this research and vice versa. Rather than viewing this process as a series of transitions among roles, I envision a dance—a moving across a mosaic dance floor, constantly connecting multiple allegiances and roles, then stepping onto a new combination of commitments. Each step requires self-reflexivity, flexibility, humility, and a tentative treatment of "data."

To be ethical in my treatment of my participants and embrace my responsibility for the impact this research might have on them (Ellis, 2007), I did not put my participants through background surveys or interviews without experiencing them myself. This was done both autoethnographically and with the help of a fellow qualitative researcher. Autoethnographic approaches have provided tools that embrace this tension in roles as a means of avoiding the trap of "speaking for" members of a culture and has deepened insights into the communication experiences of academic depression (Jago, 2002), eating disorders (Tillman-Healy, 1996), and many others (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

I also hold other roles that impacted my data collection and analysis. I am a faculty-mentor for my university's student-run TCK network. I am a graduate student learning under experts on intercultural communication, identity issues, paradigmatic and methodological concerns, and TCKs. I am a friend to many TCKs, CCKs, and others whose identities are culturally complex. And during the research collection, an article I had written about TCKs came out and was read by some participants (Jung, 2015).

The interaction of these positionalities has been complex and created a "potpourri of overlapping roles" (Tracy, 2012). To protect those I interacted with during this study, I mentally clarified which role(s) would be most involved in each step of the research

process before beginning that step. In an attempt to protect the participants' data from my bias, I wrote detailed analytic reflections (Tracy, 2013) concerning my personal experiences, questions, and frustrations that emerged during the process. These reflections became vital self-checks, as well as supplemental data during analysis.

Qualitative Research Considerations

Because it is heavily interpretive, a qualitative research approach requires a clear set of criteria for evaluating proposals, processes of data collection and analysis, and emergent findings or conclusions (Seale, 1999; Tracy, 2010). The evaluation of criteria and their application to a research project, however, is also, by default, an interpretation based on the values and meanings held by the audience (Bochner, 2000). I will now present a set of best practices and ethical commitments that arise from my epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions, and that will be useful to evaluate the quality of this project. This list borrows from and adapts Tracy (2010) as well as criteria presented in previous studies (Broome, 2009; Ellis, 2007; Fine, 1993; Fine et al., 2000; Glaser and Strause, 1967; Handler, 1994; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Richardson, 2000; Seale, 1999; Tracy, 2010, 2013; Weick, 2007)

Worthy Topic

The topic should be worthy of study. It should be clearly defined, fall within the realm of communication studies, spark interest, and have a substantial, significant impact on individuals' lives. A topic worthy of study should generate both applied findings and activist responses.

Rich Rigor

The approach to examining and reporting on the topic should be heuristically rich and conceptually rigorous. If culture-specific or majority-world forms of "knowledge" emerge, they should be considered as part of the data, including those that are metaphysical, intuitive, multi-sensory, embodied, paradoxical, and ever-changing. The study should engage constructively with existing theoretical and methodological knowledge, should have a transparent methodological process, and should provide vivid detail and thick description in the process of reaching theoretical saturation of data.

Significant Contribution

The study should make significant contributions to existing knowledge. It should not simply "support" existing knowledge or document that which is already "common knowledge." It should improve or extend theory, practice, or method in significant ways. It should offer rich and fruitful contributions that generate new applications and lines of inquiry. It should have application or theoretical extension beyond the culture that is examined.

Uplifting Mindfulness

The study should demonstrate a mindful approach that uplifts participants, audiences, and understandings. The researcher should express self-reflexivity and sincerity in tentatively approaching data collection, analysis, and distribution. Supporters of the interpretations should be highly credible. Participants and their population should be both protected and represented in ways they themselves support and in ways required by legal and ethical bodies. Individual voices should be valued, while multi-vocality is

also pursued. Audiences and participants should be personally and intellectually uplifted after encountering this study.

Multi-Method

A benefit, though not a requirement, to qualitative research is the collection of two or more sets of data. Because all qualitative research is a process of accessing, identifying, documenting, and analyzing bits and pieces of phenomena that will be carefully assembled in a process of bricolage or montage, all qualitative research is, to some degree, multi-method according to Flick (1998).

Additionally, the intentional gathering of two or more data sets for a single research project reflects an attempt to secure an in depth understanding of the phenomenon in question.… The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry. (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 8)

Process of Data Collection and Analysis

The process of gathering and examining data involved multiple steps and multiple methods. This section will list the steps and methods before describing in more detail the collection and analysis of data.

1. Identified means of contacting potential participants, including through social media, personal connections, and connections with key influencers. This was necessary to avoid a simple convenience sample and to ensure deliberate and broad distribution of the invitation.

2. Distributed recruitment invitations—including a link to the SurveyMonkey background survey and Informed Consent—through personal email (cultivated two participants), social media groups (cultivated four participants), and connections with key influencers (cultivated two participants).
3. After participants had completed the background survey and signed the Informed Consent, they were contacted by email to schedule an interview. (See Appendix D: Background Survey and Informed Consent). Added "time zone" to background survey and created a time-zone conversion to aid in coordinating international interviews.
4. I took the background survey and was interviewed online by a TCK / qualitative researcher to increase my self-reflexivity and sensitivity to subtle participant cues.
5. Conducted pilot interview on Skype. Made necessary adjustments to interview guide. Created a guide for the process of recording and accepting online interviews. (See Appendix E: Interview Guide and Appendix G – Guide for Recording Online Interviews.)
6. Conducted interviews online; recorded audio/video and took ethnographic notes. Recorded participants confirming Informed Consent / Personal Release.
7. Transcribed three interviews, created codebook, and sat with the data.
8. Transcribed and coded remaining interviews.
9. Invited participants to examine their transcribed interviews and visual data to make any clarifications they deemed important.
10. Combined background data and interview data into summary charts and timelines.
11. Analyzed all data and coding in light of the project's research question.

12 Consulted literature and continued analysis, including input from participants.

13. Wrote the dialogue among literature, participants' voices, and my interpretations.

14. Sent final transcripts, recordings, charts, and timelines to participants.

Data Collection

The process of collecting data for this project involved multiple steps and multiple methods. It also required attention to the nuances of mediated research methods and consideration of ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

Participants. Participants were individuals close to, or over, the age of 40 who were sent internationally with their parents and who self-selected as having a positive identity. Of the initial 14 who responded to an invitation, ten were selected and a total of eight individuals completed the research process. This was fewer than anticipated but an adequate number to achieve theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The sample was diverse in terms of ethnicity, passport country(s), sending organization, gender, and age. Because of researcher limitations, participants had to speak English, though for several participants English was not their mother-tongue. In order to access participants in a variety of global locations, interviews were conducted and recorded over Skype.

A recruitment invitation was distributed by email and social media. To reach respondents who were unfamiliar with the concept of TCK, two versions of the invitation were created; one used the term TCK and the other avoided specialized jargon. Personal contacts with large TCK audiences were asked to pass on the invitation attached to the email. The invitation was also distributed as a post on Facebook group pages. Some groups were public and some required my membership request and acceptance. Invitations were posted to these and other Facebook groups:

- Denizen: For Third Culture Kids
- European Third Culture Kids
- Families in Global Transition (FIGT)
- Growing up an Army Brat! Military Brat (U.S. subculture)
- Growing Up as a Missionary Kid
- I'm a Third Culture Kid, don't try and understand me
- Military Brats
- Military BRATS
- Military Brats And Supporters
- Missionary Kids
- Missionary Kids Ministries
- The MK Book
- MK Caregivers
- Pakistan Army Brats
- Raising Military "Brats"
- TCKid: A Home for Third Culture Kids
- Tckid: Third Culture Kids
- Third Culture Community
- Third Culture Network
- The "umm.. well..." you get when you ask a military brat where they're from
- You Know You're a Military Brat if.
- You know you're a missionary kid if…
- You Know You're a Third-Culture Kid When…

The final eight participants were selected from among those who responded to the email or social media invitation. They were invited to begin participation by following a web link, which gathered background information. Table 1 summarizes their demographic data.

Background Surveys. Data collection began when participants responded to the online recruiting invitation by completing the online background questions on SurveyMonkey. This served the joint purposes of conveying and receiving basic information. Participants received an overview of the research goals, the Informed Consent/Participant Release form, as well as the freedom to complete the survey at their

own pace and as briefly or thoroughly as desired. I, in turn, received clarification of their suitability for this study; their preferred dates, times, and time zone for scheduling an

Table 1
Summary of Participants

Name	Age	Sex	Passport Nations	Age at First International Move	Sending Organization	Home/Host Nations	Longest in a Host Culture
Jimmy	50	M	U.S.A.	9	Mission Support Staff	1/2	4 yrs
Anna[A]	39	F	Chilean, Israeli, Finnish	3 months old	Political and religious reasons	1/16	3 yrs
Daniel Kevin	52	M	U.S.A	1	Mission	1/1	4 yrs
Jessica[B]	38	F	U.S.A.	9	Mission Bible Translation	1/3	3 yrs
Tammy	43	F	Brazil, U.S.A., Canada	At 4 went to home nation	Mission Support Staff	2/1	5 yrs
Sophie[C]	44	F	Republic of Korea	1	Diplomatic	1/6	3 yrs
Valerie[D]	38	F	Switzer-land	5	Business Banking	1/10	4 yrs
Margriet[D]	68	F	Holland	3	Business then Government Administration	1/4	11 yrs

Notes: [A] Anna chose to participate by email rather than skype for personal reasons.
[B] Jessica's and my parents were in the same mission organization and country. We had had no contact in the past 25 years until she responded to the invitation post for this study on a TCK networking site.
[C] Sophie is the chosen pseudonym of this participant.
[D] Valerie and Margriet are daughter and mother.

interview; and a "signed" Informed Consent form. Responses to this background survey also provided a second set of data that was more "factual" than the interviews.

Interviews. Interview questions were generated from the research questions and my personal experience, as well as the bodies of literature foundational for this study, especially research on TCKs, intercultural communication, and identity (Bennet, 2009; Tracy, 2012). The semi-structured interview guide was piloted on me (by a fellow researcher who was also a TCK) and on one participant to gain feedback regarding structure, content, and language of the guide (Mancini, 2007). After these pilot interviews, it became clear that there were too many questions, and several were unclear to the participant. The interview guide was cut by approximately one third, language was added that managed the allocation of time during the interview, and several questions were substantially rewritten.

Interview durations were initially predetermined, but the pilot interview lasted five hours over three sessions, which was incredibly rich and detailed but unmanageable for this project. I cut out one-third of my interview questions, one of my three research questions, and selected which questions I wanted to get the depth on—where were the stories going to be helpful and when was a quick response just fine. Remaining interviews ranged from two to four hours and over one to three sessions. After the pilot interview, I began explaining to participants that the estimated time of two hours could easily slip by and that I would give them time-signals along the way. I told them that I also wanted to hear what was important for them to express, and I would leave it entirely up to them whether to continue, schedule a follow-up, or conclude within the sections of questions.

The interviews were semi-structured and conversational (Seidman, 2006; Tracy, 2012) following the approach Margolis (1994) took throughout his interviews with former coal miners. He was prepared to ask substantial questions and to let the participants determine what they considered substantial information.

> We sought the communities' articulation of their identity, recognizing that this included contrary positions and community conflicts. Only the most general interview schedule was prepared in advance; interviews were not interrogations, questions were conversational and open-ended. There was no time limit, the interview technique assumed agency on the part of the respondents and provided space for them to determine their own agenda. (Margolis, 1994, np)

Similarly, each participant was encouraged to co-direct the interaction. Follow-up questions, including requests for specific details, an example, or a story, were prepared and used throughout the interviews (Roulston et al., 2003). My focus was on listening actively and helping the participant to build on what they had already said (Seidman, 2006).

The interview questions were organized to avoid addressing identity at the beginning of the session. TCKs are frequently asked to explain who they are or state their identity. Beginning with the expected identity questions might have unintentionally triggered an autopilot response that could have negatively impacted the entire interview. Instead, I began by asking them to

Comm-Unity
OR
A Meta-Response to the Process of Developing Rapport.

It surprised me with my first interview but then it happened again and again. About 60 minutes into every Skype interview, I fell in love. Hard. They were amazing. I sighed in euphoria.

I guffawed at Jessica story of her confusion about why her parents had her "stuffing pickle barrels with toilet paper" in preparation for their first move.

And listened to cruelties that crushed life—I feel "pressed" but call "more weight!"

Trust and transparency allowed me a taste of their experiences. With a measure of time we became "comm-unity," like-minded about their identity. And I can't help falling in love.

describe early memories and what messages they remember from those times to set the tone for thoughtful and rich responses. When they were later asked about identity, they offered complex responses, rather than flippant or easy answers.

Mediated Interactions. Conducting mediated interviews presented challenges and opportunities that are not normally present with in-person interviews (Tracy, 2013). The mediated nature of the communication hindered and hid communicative expressions, including physical movements around a space, scents, textures, and even flavors. Technical issues plagued each interaction. Skype, a free online video conferencing site, was available to every participant who created a unique username, but connecting to that person sometimes required a pre-interview invitation to be "friends" that delayed the interview's start. The need for audio and video data, as well as the need to record it on a separate program, created a system in which any one of the several pieces could malfunction; two interview recordings contained limited or no video data. Other challenges of mediated interviewing included participants switching between computers and/or mobile devices, devices sliding off of their pillow perches, and urgent scurrying to plug in the power cord.

The benefits of mediated interviewing, however, completely passed the challenges. The synchronous, or real-time, interviews allowed access to individuals who would not have been included otherwise. Disruptions, distractions, and disconnections were present in every interview and became an unanticipated source of data, revealing the participants' responses to these interruptions. And participants were physically in their living places and able to choose a day and time, which increased their comfort level. This also had the unexpected benefit of placing me, as the researcher, as a guest in their home

and, in a sense, under their authority. They chose the time, invited me onto their turf, educated me about their lives, co-guided the interview, and expressed their authoritative understandings of their positive identity as a TCK.

Recordings of the interviews were transcribed completely. Detailed notes and observations of each interview, including participant demeanor, tone of voice, and nonverbal communication, were noted for each session.

Participant Review. To enact mindful respect for the participants and their individual understandings and intensions, each participant was contacted after the interview for additional thoughts or feedback, as well as verification of their agreement to be referred to by their preferred name. One participant chose a pseudonym, which is used throughout. They were invited to comment on, change, modify, or clarify any part of their personal story that might add to or build on my understandings of what they meant. Any revisions were considered additional data. Each participant also received a copy of their background survey and interview recording, as well as any analytic summaries or visual displays. Regardless of permission give respect for the desires and dignity of participants guided the use of and representation of all data collected for this project.

IRB Compliance. This study underwent Institutional Review Board (IRB) review at two universities. Both were required because I was a doctoral candidate at one and a faculty member at the other. Exempt status was approved by the IRB of each university (Appendix A and B).

In compliance with IRB requirements, participants received an Informed Consent/Personal Release form and confirmed both their understanding and their willingness to participate. Informed Consent was necessary to ensure participants were

involved voluntarily and that their dignity and rights were upheld. Personal Release was necessary to allow the academic and public use of identifiable data, including their name/pseudonym, recognizable personal information, and their visual image. The Informed Consent/Personal Release included a request to video record the interview and to use digital pictures and video.

As part of the background survey, each participant encountered the Informed Consent/Personal Release form and was asked if they would like to participate. A response of "yes" or "no" was required before participants could move to the next question, and affirmative responses required participants to digitally sign the form. Of the 12 individuals who began the survey, eight continued to complete interviews. Two surveys were ended before agreeing to participate, one declined on the Informed Consent/Personal Release, and one was received after analysis was in process. The incomplete and non-consenting surveys were immediately deleted from the system, and the late survey was set aside for a potential future interview.

At the beginning of each interview session, participants were reminded of the purpose, process, and potential risks of involvement and asked if they had any questions. Before beginning the interview, each participant verbally agreed to participate. This became a digital record of Informed Consent/Personal Release at the start of each interview session.

After completion of the interview, participants were asked if they would prefer to create a pseudonym or to use a version of their actual name. Rather than being protected from public scrutiny, members of this culture might want their story told in their own words and attributed to them (Barkdull, 2009).

All data was kept in both digital and printed form. Data was organized by type and by participant. Ethnographic field notes were kept separate from collected data. Table 2 summarizes all data collected.

Table 2
Summary of Collected Data

Method of Collection	Type of Data	Transcribed / Typed Pages	Duration of Interviews
Background Survey	Demographics, Informed Consent, Contact information	35 pages, ~ 4.5 pages each	N/A
Ethnographic Notes & Analytic Reflections	Descriptions, Observations, Personal responses, Possible themes	84 pages, ~ 11 pages each	N/A
Participant Interviews	Verbal responses, Nonverbal expressions	412 pages, ~ 52 pages each	21 hours, ~3 hours each

Note: Interview with one participant (Anna) was by email due to participant preference.

Data Analysis

The data gathered by the background survey and interviews were analyzed through a modified grounded approach. Though the theoretical constructs, or sensitizing concepts, I was looking for in the data had been generated by the literature, examining the data through rhetorical lenses revealed additional findings unanticipated by the literature. Following an iterative process, during which data is read and viewed, then theoretical constructs are considered, and the data is reconsidered in an alternating or circular manner (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Srivastava, & Hopwood, 2009; Tracy, 2013), allowed an emic (emergent, data-driven) approach to be placed in dialogue with existing knowledge and theories.

To analyze the survey and interview data, the project was set up using NVivo software (Bazeley, 2007; Saldana, 2009). After all data had been read twice, consideration of the question "what is happening here" led to additional analytic memos and beginning codes (Saldaña, 2009; Tracy, 2013). As I began to see commonalities among codes and meanings, I modified codes into categories and added codes that might fill out gaps in the categories. Second-level codes were generated to move analysis beyond simple description of the data. This coding for deeper meaning identifies what is going on below the surface, points to explanations and connections, and "includes interpretation and identifying of patterns, rules, or cause-effect progressions" (Tracy, 2013, p. 194).

The data of three participants was examined line-by-line to identify preliminary and second-level codes, which were collected into categories and assembled into a preliminary codebook. The remaining interviews were transcribed and coded. New codes were added to the codebook as they emerged. Then the foundational literature was re-examined, and codes were added or adapted as part of the iterative process. Finally, the codebook was filtered in light of the project's research question. The most relevant and interesting codes were prioritized in the analysis, while other codes were set aside for future examination.

To better organize the messy mobilities and cultural transitions described by the participants, the background and interview data were consolidated into two graphic formats. Transition charts visually represented the age, year, and location data into a list of transitions (see Table 3). These analytical charts revealed gaps in some of their

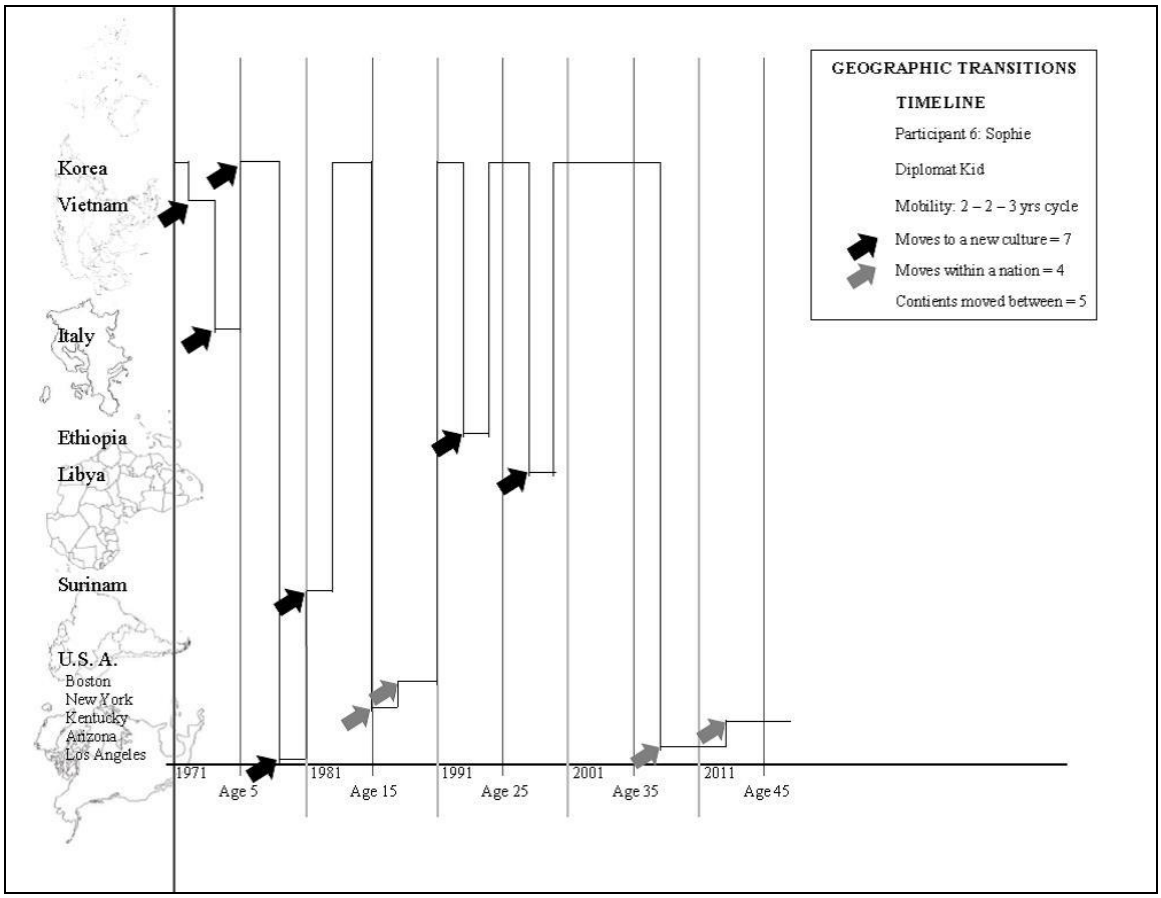
timelines and prompted a search for deeper data and more complete information than had been initially provided.

Table 3
Sample Transition Chart: David Kevin

Location	Duration Yrs	Start Yr	End Yr
Youth (birth – approx 18 years old)			
Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.	1	1962	1963
Island of Cebu, the Philippines	4	1963	1967
Minnesota, U.S.A., kindergarten	1	1967	1968
Island of Cebu, the Philippines, 1st-3rd grades	4	1968	1972
Michigan, U.S.A., 4th gr.	1	1972	1973
Island of Cebu, the Philippines, 5th-7th gr.	4	1973	1977
Faith Academy, Manila, Philippines, 8th gr.	1	1977	1978
California, U.S.A., 9th gr.	1	1978	1979
Faith Academy, Manila, Philippines 10-12th gr.	3	1979	1981
Adult (over 18 years old)			
CA—greater LA area, 1981 – current	33	1981	2015
PI visits 7–10 times. Latest Dec. 2009			
Summary			
Age	52		
Nations	2		
Places listed	5		
Transitions	11		

Similarly, geographic timelines were used to visualize participants' global mobility across their lifetime (see Figure 3). This prompted additional questions and codes for comparison among the participants' data. Visual representation of the geographic data highlighted variations in types of mobility, including single-continent mobility, transoceanic cyclical mobility, and globally erratic mobility.

Figure 3
Sample Geographic Transitions Timeline: Sophie



During the charting and graphing process, it became clear that for several participants, circumstances might have impacted their responses in significant ways. Temporary circumstances, such as a sick father, a recent divorce, a pregnancy, or an international move, likely brought to the fore those aspects of themselves connected with health, family, intimacy, legacy, or adaptation. Permanent circumstances, such as a physical disability or being the adopted child in a biologically related family, likely increase sensitivity to issues of victimization and ability, image, and difference. These circumstances were noted in each participant's data, but "unusual circumstances" was not

coded because that information had not been gathered from all participants during data collection.

Distribution of Research and Findings

The final step in the research process was distributing the project and findings to its necessary and potential audiences. During consultation with my dissertation committee—the most necessary audience—structural changes to the formal document were considered. The inclusion of my verbal asides into the dissertation product, as suggested by Sarah Tracy, served to increase the dialectical nature of this project. Verbal asides were paired with the relevant portion of the formal text. The juxtaposition of my asides and either the foundational literature (as in Chapters 1–3 and 6) or the participant's experiences (as in Chapters 4–5) revealed more complex understandings than could be seen through one perspective alone.

Another audience for this project is the international community of TCK scholars and practitioners, including those affiliated with the organization for Families in Global Transition (FIGT). Prior to defense and finalization of this dissertation, findings and implications were presented to multiple audiences at the 2016 FIGT annual conference in The Netherlands (Jung & Beard, 2016). This gave experts in the field, and particularly the TCKs among them, the opportunity to speak into this deeply dialectic dissertation. One participant of this research and one dissertation committee member (Dr. Cottrell) attended the conference and were able to interact with the data and the resulting analysis in unexpected ways.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In order to develop a better understanding of long-term TCK identity, particularly that which is perceived as positive, this chapter will respond to the question, not "Who are you?" but, rather, "How are you?" More specifically, "In what ways and through what processes have these participants developed and maintained a positive identity?" The surveys, interviews, and post-interview interactions of each participant were examined to find patterns of what seemed to make a difference for this positively deviant sample of TCKs. Concepts and related stories were were considered in light of existing literature on TCKs, identity, and communication. This chapter presents these findings, which attempt to explain what the participants' data might explain for communication scholars, identity researchers, and the TCK-connected field.

These findings, related to how TCKs maintain a positive identity, are presented as four primary themes: Agency, Choice, Filters, and Positivity. After an initial explanation of the theme's general meaning, I distinguish the ways that a TCK experience alters the common understanding of that concept. Then, based on what emerged from the data, I present communication strategies used either by the TCKs themselves or by other people or groups. These three questions create the internal structure for each of the four major themes.

1. What aspects of the TCK experience seem to impact participants' perception of that concept? If specific variations in the TCK experience seem to impact a theme, possible explanations are discussed.

2. What types of communication to TCKs seem to impact participants' perception of the theme?
3. What communication strategies seem important for participants as they develop and maintain their positive identity?

Data from all eight participants are liberally used to demonstrate concepts and support claims made in each sub point. Connections among the themes are explored.

In keeping with the interpretive paradigm and the ethical considerations undergirding this study, this chapter does not attempt to make authoritative statements about the nature of identity, the legitimacy of a positive identity, or generalized communication strategies. Rather, these themes are intended as heuristics, arising from the substantial but limited data of eight sets of lived experiences, and useful for generating new lines of inquiry.

Epistemological Enlightenment
OR
The Talking Drums

Like the child carrying a djembe, I carried my identity down to the beach to join my individual and collective participants in their percussive production of identity. My participants brought their talking drums; some wore scars in cross or flag symbols but all were vibrant, unique, and adjusted for the individual performer. In this drum circle they improvise in constant flux, collaborating in an open air third space. An Ethiopian beat transitioned to a Vietnamese beat, which suddenly moved through Surinam to a crisp British march.

But I had brought my djembe, not my talking drum. My identity, like my djembe, is versatile, powerful, and a bit beat up. As I echoed a cadence back to Valerie, her beat resonated through my body, shaking loose tension in my own self-concept. I entered a slower, deeper beat with Jimmy, our pain so similar I might, at times, have slipped into my own beat. Jessica and I pounded, Ghana, our common land, as performatively interpreted by this long-lost friend.

I pull out my own talking drum, with its scars and newly tightened leather, enter the drum circle of participants and onlookers, and play a beat I call "Communication Strategies…"

Agency

Agency refers to an individual's ability to impact the course of their own life. This concept is connected to the ontological assumptions that undergird this study: "To be human [whether TCK or not] is to have choice and autonomy and to be simultaneously constrained and influenced by contexts and relationship." Of interest here is not the possible agency of an individual, but, rather, how that person perceives their agency. Perception of one's authorship of life shapes what will be created, including that person's sense of self. In this sense, perception is the reality.

Agency seems to be a foundationally important concept in exploring what it means for a TCK to have a positive identity. For some TCKs, a strong sense of agency might be bolstered more by characteristics of their home or host culture, and not as clearly connected to their third culture experience. For example, Valerie, a TCK-Dutch-Swiss hybrid, boated through her city's canals by herself and was generally given a great deal of freedom to explore as a young child.

> I remember going, and looking back on that now, wow, I can't believe my mom let me do that. But I remember going in one of those little tiny dinghy boats with two oars through the canals, through the farm fields. And I'd go on my own for hours in the water…I was eight? Nine? So pretty young… And just a lot of freedom. And be able to bike everywhere, and going to the swimming pool on your own. And being allowed to be independent from a very young age, which I think is good.
>
> And Valerie's freedom extended beyond freedom in the environment.
>
> They let me do a lot too and gave me a lot of freedom as a child because the motto at home was always "well, if you're honest with us then we can let you do. But if you start doing stuff behind our back then we have to be stricter. But if you maintain your grades, and if you do well at school, and you're honest with us, there's not much you're not allowed to do."

She ascribes this independence several times, not to her TCK upbringing, but to the Dutch independence of her parents.

Independence is not unique to TCKs, but TCKs who have this common cultural characteristic incorporated into their hyphenated identities might engage and frame their internationally mobile experiences differently than those without this background. To explore the agency of TCKs I will first explain how agency is different for those with a TCK experience, then I will look at how other people's communication about agency impacts TCKs, and, finally, I will present communication strategies used by the participant TCKs to develop and maintain their positive identity.

How Agency is Different for TCKs

It should come as no surprise that a child who experiences major changes will have their sense of agency challenged. Repeated international moves for children challenge the development of a sense of control, unlike the experience of sojourners, who choose that experience as adults, or borderlanders, whose changes are more commonly a visit followed by a return home. A TCKs experience of agency is also different than the experience of foster children, refugees, and domestic nomads, because unlike foster children or refugees, TCKs move with parents who have chosen to move abroad usually as an expression of their own strong sense of agency. And, though TCKs do travel with family, they are less likely to be surrounded by others of their culture who are making the transition with them, and, therefore, are less able to commiserate with a culturally similar community.

Agency then, for TCKs, is not a question of more or less confidence. Developing a more fruitful understanding of TCK identity involves answering the questions of "in

what areas," and "in what ways," TCKs develop their sense of agency. For example, the connection between agency and a TCK's national and linguistic identity has previously been examined. As Meneses explains,

> The third culture individual does not assume the identity imposed by his or her passport but negotiates belonging to a different culture or country by adopting cultural values, norms, and behaviors, as well as language. They assume the behavior of agentive beings that can "resist, negotiate, change, and transform themselves and others." (2005, p. 178–179.)

This is not unlike an immigrant experience in some ways.

However, TCKs might experience dozens of cultures, exponentially complicating national identity. As Anna explains, "I have three passports…never been to Finland. Live in…" And Valerie, though she has taken the citizenship of her current location, continues to resist the legal loopholes that prevent her from holding dual passports with her birth/ethnic nation.

> I turned Swiss a month before [my] oldest was born but in the process lost my Dutch nationality. I don't think identity is only related to that obviously but that also all plays a role where I've had to accept the fact that for now—hold on, I'm not accepting it—where I'm okay with the fact right now that I've lost my Dutch nationality but where I'm ready to kind of take on the battle to see if I can get it back because I think it's ridiculous that I lost it in the first place. But I'm also feeling Swiss enough that I want to have a Swiss passport, and I want to be able to vote here, and I want to always be able to come back here because this has become home to me, if I can identify any country with home.

This negotiation of national allegiance is not uncommon among TCKs, but agency in other areas of life and identity can be difficult for some TCKs.

Immersion into an Unknown Context. One challenge to agency that is a part of just about any TCK experience is immersion into an unknown context. A TCK's childhood is characterized by cultural transitions and even the most self-assured and self-directed TCKs learn that a single move can bring new contexts, cultures, and rules, and a

lack of knowledge can have lasting implications. Simply trying to locate the lavatory in a new school with a new language left young Valerie lost, wandering the halls, and worrying her new teachers. For Daniel Kevin, not knowing the etiquette of introducing oneself in the U.S., either on a résumé or in person, unknowingly damaged his authority to self-define.

> When I first started working, I had to put a résumé together. And when I put the résumé together, I wasn't sure—I went by Kevin my whole life—whether I should put D. Kevin Thomas, Daniel Kevin Thomas, and so I just put "Daniel Kevin Thomas." And when the person interviewed me, they looked at it and said, "So, Daniel, tell me about yourself." And then he introduced me to everyone as Daniel. And it stuck.

Not only did he shift from being Kevin to Daniel, the choice was made by someone who had only just met him and was soon to become his supervisor. The lack of knowledge inherent in a TCK experience can tip the scale of agency, which can leave significant decisions in the hands other individuals, systems of operation, or fate. Some TCKs seem able to harness the independence characteristic of their family, culture, or even their personality type, to meet the challenges to agency that accompany a transition. As adults their expression of agency, though admittedly complicated, might be quite strong.

Being On Your Own. A second challenge many TCKs have faced is a period of time during which they felt, essentially, on their own. Several participants identified a post-high school or secondary school transition back to the home country is a heightened experience of being on their own. As noted in Chapter 2, there has been substantial research on the challenges of reentry that have led to the creation of transition programs at international and boarding schools, reentry programs offered by caring organizations, and a variety of TCK college groups. When TCKs today reenter their home culture,

especially to enter a college, many have had some re-exposure to the culture, transition training, and reintegration assistance. Their experience is more like a bird tentatively stepping out of the nest and into the wind, observed by parents who are able to swoop under the fledgling with a supportive bump. In contrast, the majority of my participants experienced not a stretching of their wings, but an expulsion from the nest. As Daniel Kevin explained:

> When I finally graduated from high school… you know most people in their junior and senior year even in the Philippines are already applying for colleges and universities. Well, that just never crossed my parents' path. When I finally graduated from high school, it then dawned on them. I was given a one-way ticket, $500, and sent back to L.A. When my sister finally graduated two years later, she had already been enrolled in college; she had a place to go, a place to stay. Whereas, I had one person I was going to stay with for a few nights, and they were going to try to help me find somebody in the church to stay with. Now, I was fortunate that when I came back a couple that we had gone to church with let me stay with them for, I would say a good, a good two years, maybe, a year and a half, maybe, before I got out on my own. You know, that was an interesting…that was an interesting period of time.

His parents were not being cruel. He managed to find his way. And, in the eyes of his home culture Daniel Kevin was an adult.

But when this experience of being on your own occurs at a younger age or in a more vulnerable context, the data suggest it can hinder a healthy dependence on others, and foster internal isolation. Three participants identified specific periods in their childhoods when they felt unable to get the help they needed from adults. Margriet is one of those three.

When Margriet's mother became seriously ill while the family was in Indonesia the 6-year-old was shipped to her grandfather's home in the Netherlands, where she spent the next two years being on her own. She still remembers being told, "you are a guest.

You'd better behave." After several other on your own experiences, interspersed with wonderful explorations in the Amazon jungle of Surinam with her father, Margriet was sent back to the Netherlands at 18 years old for studies. She managed, but she also floundered. Finally, a couple provided a compassionate context in which she could learn what it would mean for her to "survive on your own." As she put it, "Stop whining. […] Nobody will pity you for more than five minutes." Two conjoined through-lines in her interview were (a) survival without dependence on others and (b) "choose to have a positive outlook at all times."

Isolation
OR
Scene 10: Alone With Malaria

I quietly interrupted the translation meeting under the gazebo in our village compound. "Mommy, Daddy? Sorry…" I hovered near the wall's opening. "I just wanted to tell you that I have malaria. I have a fever, my eyes hurt when I look at light, and I'm hurting all over. I took some chloroquine and I'm going to sleep in the guest room."

Maybe someone nodded. I don't remember. But no one moved. No one checked my temperature or dosage, gave me a hug, or walked with me. The work went on. As I put myself in isolation to sleep, I felt, not lonely, not independent, but alone. And I knew something about that was not right. It was normal but definitely not right.

I was out of my skin, watching "Amy the MK" in the Alone With Malaria episode.

I was 10.

The stories and coping strategies of Jimmy and Jessica follow a similar pattern. After an early trauma, Jimmy assumed for nearly 20 years that no one cared about his pain and that he was on his own. He explains that "my role [as an MK, as a TCK] was to exist in that setting" and his adult life has an effort to avoid making waves, while simultaneously venting, "behaving badly," and holding onto "self-pity." He "learned not to seek help or to seek input from other people. It's kind of a withdrawal for isolation." Jessica's father, then her mother, became gravely ill, leaving her and her sister experiencing life largely on their own. Her adult life followed much the same path.

This is not to say that the parents of these TCKs were neglectful or uncaring. I believe all three sets of parents cared deeply for their children and were unaware of the way these periods of time were perceived[12] by their TCKs. But the impact on long-term agency seems to be considerable. And it is worth noting that of the six participants who had married, only these three had divorced or were currently in the process.

When young TCKs make decisions without an adequate sense of support and/or safety, they might not be taking independent action but, rather, acting by perceived necessity. As adults, they likely mourn the absence of assistance, but learn to either vent or camouflage their pain, to whine about it or always look on the bright side of life. The data suggest that TCKs with this experience develop a sense of agency that perceives life shaping decisions as necessary but unsupported efforts to survive or get by.

Communication by Others That Can Impact TCK Agency

Regardless of the agentic challenges faced by TCKs there are several types of communication by others to TCKs that have the potential to significantly improve their development of agency. Participants specifically identified the following three strategies: increasing knowledge prior to move, re-/writing scripts to include or exclude TCKs, and public demonstrations of backing.

Increasing Prior Knowledge. Multiple participants wished, in retrospect, that they had been given more preparation for their transitions. Learning the language of the new culture before moving there was a consistent theme. As Valerie explained,

[12] There is no clear, universal measure of how much support or safety is adequate. Adequacy is dependent on factors beyond the scope of this study.

> [My mother] told me "the school where you're going to is going to be in English." But she didn't…I don't blame her. I would do it differently with my own kids. She didn't give me any kind of language skills before I went to school. She just thought, "She'll figure it out. She's 5. She'll adapt." Which of course I did, but I wrote a chapter on it in my book "B at Home." I couldn't find the bathroom. I wandered as a 5-year-old around the school for 45 minutes looking for the bathroom because I didn't know how to ask, and the teachers seemed too busy. And they were frantically looking for me, and it was this whole thing. And in the end the bathroom…was literally around the corner, but I never found it because I didn't know where to go. So that was a little hard. Hhhm. So I didn't feel very prepared for it.

This, of course, can be difficult when a child is very young or culture changes happen frequently. For Anna, who experienced 18 moves across 15 countries on four continents by the age of 18, it would have been quite difficult to learn any local language well during her stay, much less during preparation for moving. For her, active communication through playing made the language challenges a bit easier.

> I never lived in a country where I would speak the language when I was a child… I would play with other children or spend time with my maids or go to local schools. It was always assumed I was a foreigner, and communication wasn't based on language or questions, rather on activities.

If language acquisition is not feasible prior to a move, parents and others can increase a TCKs prior knowledge by engaging the child in the process of preparation. For Jessica and Jimmy that meant cleaning and packing the 50 gallon drums that would protect their families' belongings on the long voyage across an ocean. Jimmy remembers

> "All these barrels showing up at our house and my parents had us kids be a part of washing the barrels out. I have this vivid picture of us with the hose, playing in the barrels, and filling the barrels up. So we were a part of that, integrated into the whole process. We were told, "These barrels are going to carry our belongings over to where we are going." It was significant and I still remember it.

Increasing prior knowledge can also involve making the new environment and audiences knowledgeable about the incoming TCK. As a child Margriet experienced little

advanced preparation for her moves, so when she became the parent of a young TCK, Margriet found ways to give her daughter Valerie connections before her move; they visited the school Valerie would be attending after the move and coordinated with the principal to give the new girl some time to interact with her future peers. After their move, Valerie was able to host a pizza party at their house to reconnect with those she had met and to meet more children. Essentially, Margriet gave her daughter a connection to look forward to and gave her new schoolmates a fun taste of what Valerie would be like.

TCKs can also benefit from prior knowledge, not just about where they will move, but also about what might be expected of them, and what consequences they might anticipate. In a sense, parents and sending organizations can give TCKs advanced understandings of their roles, and how to interact with various future audiences.

Re/Writing Scripts to Include/Exclude TCKs. When an organization sends a family into an international position they typically provide some sort of training for the adults. When the family accepts a representational position in an international context the child might be expected to play a role as well. As MK author Michele Phoenix explains children of missionaries and, I would add, military and other representational personnel "feel held to higher standards than their peers. [These expectations] can become a debilitating pressure" especially if standards and consequences are unclear (2015, p. 1).

This pressure to perform a part well can become even more difficult when the TCKs has no script and is trying to figure out their part on the fly, while playing their part in front of a live audience. For Jimmy, an explanation from his new teacher of the boy's role in class and why seemingly minor aspects of his performance were important would

have made a significant difference, as would adequate time to figure out and acclimate to his new role.

> I would just like to have been given a little bit more time in the process to let me, let me, you know… "Can you just partner with me and help me move toward that… can you help me understand how important it is? I understand how important it is to you, but can you help me understand why it's important to me?" Cause maybe part of it was "I don't care about putting my tote away. I want to go home." Or, I know I wasn't aware of not putting the tote away, but for whatever reason I didn't and I, I think I just wasn't focused on it.

Parents might articulate the TCK's role clearly, both to the child and to other relevant adults, as in the following example.

> When I was visiting with a missionary family a few weeks ago, I asked an 11-year old boy why his family had moved to Romania. He told me he was there to *"introduce people to Jesus."* Perhaps the most meaningful words I heard on that three-week trip were his mother's when she said, "No, honey, mom and dad are here to introduce people to Jesus. Your job is to be a kid. [italics and underline in original] (Phoenix, 2015, p. 1.)

Several participants also noted that during important transitions, their parents created roles, complete with requisite props, for them to gain confidence with their peers and even establish co-actors in their performances. For Jimmy, it was a special go kart.

> When my parents started seeing me struggle so much, they got a hold of our sending mission and…my parents got some extra money to fund this go kart. They got it from the go kart champion of Malaysia. It was his old one. So that go kart in my life, and in the lives of other kids around me, became significant, a part of my identity. So it was, I think, it was brilliant of my parents, because they gave me this distraction on one hand but also an identity to for me, and also for others to relate to me. I was the kid with the go kart now, and I had no issues with sharing it… It just became a unique focal point not just for myself but for others.

When Jimmy was debilitated by his teacher's pressure to perform from an unavailable script, parents collaborated with their sending organization to give him a clear role that was publicly understood and reinforced by his peers.

It is outside the scope of this study to evaluate the quality or correctness of any roles that TCKs are expected to play. What the data seem to make clear, however, is that when TCKs are aware of articulated roles that they can prepare for, refine or reject, as well as receive praise or critique for, this can improve their sense of agency. But parents can also go one step further in demonstrating to a TCK their place in an organizational script.

Demonstrations of Backing. For several participants, a significant moment that impacted their self-concept was when their father took another important adult to task for treatment of the TCK. For Jimmy, it was when his father took the boy's new teacher to task for his cruelty.

> When that classroom setting closed in on me, every…nothing else mattered 'cause I shut down, and I could not cope. And the way that I would break down in class, because emotionally I was not prepared, and I would break down and I would just tell him my stomach hurt. As I'd start crying as a little boy, you know, dealing with this overwhelming pressure that I felt at the time. And he would, they would you know "what's wrong with you?" Well what am I gonna say? I was a little boy: "my stomach hurts," so off to the nurse. You know that happened repeatedly. But then my dad he got he got wind of it, and he started talking to me.
>
> And he figured out, okay, because I tried to tell my dad and I cried, my dad figured out "okay this guy's, this guy's um a problem with my son." So my dad showed up, hhh, my dad showed up one day uh at the classroom and pulled the teacher and me outside and, you know, he let him have it. I don't know if that was the best thing, but it showed me something. It showed me my dad was prepared to go to bat for me. So you know after that I think it got better, took some time but um, yeah after that year getting out of that class and onto different teachers, yeah it got better.

This TCK witnessed a scene at odds with the unwritten script he had accepted to that point and that impacted his experience immediately.

When a child moves internationally, their whole world might become a series of dangerous unknowns. The laws and officials who created a safety net in the home culture

are absent, and the TCK might not know how to recognize or use protective people or processes in the new context. But when a primary caregiver actively protects that child from another person with more perceived social capital than the child, that message might serve as a lifelong reminder of the child's value and legitimacy, significantly improving that child's sense of agency.

A TCKs perception of their agency, or ability to direct their own life, seems to be shaped by common aspects of a third culture experience, including being required to follow parents who have chosen to move abroad and often being physically distant from others with a similar experience. This already complicated development of agency can be further challenged by (a) immersion into an unknown context and (b) a period of time when they felt they were on their own, especially during childhood. But regardless of the challenges to agency that a TCKs experiences, there are three distinct communication strategies that can be used by parents or other adults in a TCKs life to improve a TCKs perception of agency: increasing prior knowledge, re-/writing scripts to include or exclude TCKs, and public demonstrations of backing.

The foundational importance of agency in a TCKs development and maintenance of a positive identity cannot be overstated. In fact, the perception of agency is strongly connected with the themes of choice, filters, and framing of positivity. With this understanding of agency in mind to examine the second theme, choice.

Choice

The process of making choices, though an internal process, is largely shaped by and expressed through communication with others. From others we learn to identify when a decision needs to be made, what options are available for us to choose, what

values should be reinforced by our selection, and how to communicate our decision-making to those who want an explanation. Not surprisingly, a person's choices and how they see those choices are influenced by their sense of agency, or their perceived ability to make meaningful choices that impact their lives. And, similarly, a person's choices foster, and can allow a positive identity to develop.

This section will begin by explaining how the experience of choice seems to be different for TCKs and conclude with several communication strategies about making choices that seem to impact these TCKs' positive identities. Communication from others that has an impact on TCK choices, though surely important, did not emerge as primary results of this study and will not be speculated upon.

How Choices are Different for TCKs

Making choices is a human experience, not unique to one population. What makes this social behavior unique for TCKs is a blend of cultural difference, cultural shifts, mobility, and organization constraint. Unlike immigrant and refugee children TCKs are less likely to be surrounded by culturally similar others, and so are less able to learn from others' mistakes. For TCKs the choices to be made never end; choices must be made between fork and chopsticks, then shaking hands and bowing, English and Arabic, straight As or quiet Cs. Their cultural shifts and organizational contexts likely create a wide variety of types of decisions they are required to make, including language, their role, and how to perceive and present their other cultures and contexts. An organizational context might also create social constraints on available choices.

Choice making then, for TCKs is not simply about making choices and assessing the relative value or correctness of those decisions. Developing a more fruitful

understanding TCK identity requires examination of how TCKs perceive and respond to their multiple cultural processes of choice making, and how their perceptions impact their actual choices.

Shifting Cultural Contexts Create Constantly Moving Targets. Decision making in a single culture can be likened to an archer deciding which targets to aim for and what methods/materials to use, and then training to increase their accuracy and consistency in hitting the target. For TCKs a change in cultural context includes a different set of cultural values, which shifts or creates additional desired outcomes or targets, as well as the available methods and materials available. Now the TCK has to see the new or changed targets, decide among them, select from the available methods and materials, and then begin, again, to develop accuracy and consistency in hitting their desired target(s).

When Valerie moved to a new culture her familiar methods of academic behavior were unwittingly hitting the mark on her host culture's target, bringing unexpected praise, and signaling that she had somehow missed the mark in her home culture's target. She hadn't realized the new target existed, nor what she would need in order to aim well, only that she was suddenly violating her home culture's values.

> [I knew that I should] just try to be normal, don't try to stand out, there's no reason to be exceptional. As they say in Holland, "just act normal, and then you're already acting crazy enough." So when I got elected into this International Junior Honor Society thing [in Luxemburg] I was MOR*tified*. I was like, "oh my gosh! I'm such a nerd. And this is awful, and I hate it." So then [class], I was told that it was okay and that I should actually be happy about it.

In Luxemburg, she excelled at hitting the cultural target, but when the family moved to Switzerland she refused to accept the new cultural targets, including the language, the

International Baccalaureate (IB) education system, and groups of people from her home culture.

When TCKs shift cultural contexts, their process of making choices also seem to change. A TCK might be able to adapt or integrate cultural values over time but a new cultural context or a return to a past context, at least initially, seems to present another unknown set of cultural values with new materials and methods. This might require a reassessment of the targets, selection of effective and acceptable methods and materials, and training to hit the new or altered targets with accuracy and consistency.

Organizational Contexts Constrain Social Choices. TCKs choices might be limited by their parents' sending organizations, not unlike the children of celebrities, preachers, and law enforcement personnel. The social impact of being the dependent of an organization representative can be clear, direct, and unwavering. Military kids and missionary kids are classic examples. A military TCK friend of mine nearly got his father demoted by showing an interest in an officer's daughter. Missionary TCK Jessica recalled that

Black and White
OR
Shades of an Accent

I met two ladies from the States, Ms. White, who was black, and Ms. Black, who was white. I spoke to each in the English dialect I connected with their physical characteristics. All the white people in Minnesota and Ghana used the accent of their North American or European home culture, and all Ghanaians used a pidgin dialect (I had never seen a black person in Minnesota). But when I politely spoke to Ms. White they exchange awkward glances. They had no earthly idea what I was very clearly saying in my thick Ghanaian English. Mercifully, neither was offended, but I was confused. What did I do wrong and why was that suddenly wrong?

At a professional conference 30 years later I spoke in my Ghanaian dialect to a man from Ghana. I acted as a tribal "auntie" and cautioned him not to give up his accent or cultural heritage. A colleague was deeply offended that I, a white woman, had told a minority man not to "lose his culture."

The trouble is not my accent, it is closer to my "heart language" than any other. The issue was that some aspect of the situation had drastically shifted. And my choice had betrayed me, turned against me.

personal privacy was not a social choice she could make; in her village privacy was hard to come by and in her home culture their family newsletters were read by supporters, family, and friends, and included personal updates on every family member. Missionary TCK Daniel Kevin was often approached in his home culture churches by strangers who would chat with him as if they knew him well, which, in a sense, they usually did.

The social impact of being the dependent of diplomatic, business, or another organization representative is less direct, but can still be powerful. Diplomat TCK Sophie was treated differently by her teacher in Surinam in part because of the perceived rank of her father's diplomatic country. And missionary TCK Jimmy was always aware that he was different than the other kids in his boarding school because he was the dorm parents' son.

Among the challenges TCKs face when developing their patterns of choice the changing context and parent's sending organization seem to have a significant impact on TCKs' development a positive identity. Though the communication from others has an impact on TCK choices, the primary results of this study relate to the communication strategies used by TCKs themselves.

Communication Strategies TCKs Use To Make and Explain Choices

In telling their stories and describing their experiences, the participants of this study described several types of decisions they commonly face and what strategies for making decisions they have used to reinforce their positive identities. These communication strategies involve negotiating disclosure, selectively telling their stories, and explaining the choice to make culturally unacceptable decisions.

Negotiating Disclosure in Introductions. When deciding how to introduce themselves to others TCKs have to select among multiple options. One TCK listened so intently to the self-introductions of others around the circle, that when it was her turn, she realized she had forgotten to prepare her response. She froze and responded to someone's prompt with, "I don't know!"

Disclosure can be difficult to negotiate when a TCK is choosing among too many versions of themselves and too many ways to explain. A TCK can feel perpetually foreign, always different, and ever the other—always trying to explain but rarely being understood.

And finding ways to present a contextualized or complex explanation of self can be challenging in a low-context culture, like the U.S. If a culture does not place a high value on context but expects a person to directly "say what you mean and mean what you say" and appreciates actions and communication that can be understood without explanation, expressing a complicated identity that is outside of its context and that requires extensive explanation can be difficult, unsuccessful, and damaging to relationships.

For Anna, the simple solution is to adapt to the cultural context. When asked *who* she is, she will decide based on *where* she is.

> In my home country, the social rules include some four questions to establish whether the person is part of the same social class and someone you can relate to. What is your surname? What do you do for living? Which part of the city do you live? Where did you study? Answering any of those questions doesn't require
>
> "lying" or leaving anything out; having studied abroad is something fairly common and doesn't stand out either as some "exotic factor."

> In my current country, people don't really ask that many questions. They can spot my accent straight away and know that I come from a country that they admire a great deal and usually feel intimidated about as they see it some sort of a "superior nation" and don't want to show their ignorance. They might ask whether I have children to see if I am single or what does my husband do to find out how he got a foreign wife, but, other than that, asking personal questions or expecting some sort of an introduction is not part of the culture.

The participants, overall, chose to minimize the importance of the introduction and give the person what it seems they want to hear. Jimmy explained that even as a child, "I would tell [new people] things that they would already find out anyway." And Daniel Kevin discussed the ways he adapts his self-introduction to fit the social context, confident that if the relationship continues that person will have more opportunities to learn more about him.

Selective Storytelling. Just as TCKs find ways to navigate choices regarding disclosure, they can also choose to be quite selective in the stories they tell of their lives. Even during data collection it quickly became clear that there were discrepancies between the survey and interview data of each participant. Some differences were minor but many seemed quite significant.

The survey responses most likely to be out of synch with the interview data were those asking for locations where participants had lived. On her survey, Jessica stated that she had lived in three cities within one country, specifically, "1986–1989 Ghana (Tamale, Accra, Akloba)," but during her interview we spent half an hour discovering that by the time she was 18 she had moved 13 times to 11 separate locations. And Anna clearly addressed the question of "where were you born" by responding "Finland," but three questions later, when she listed the places she had lived, Finland was curiously absent:

> From 0 years on - Israel 3 years, Czechoslovakia 1 year, Soviet Union 1 year, Bulgaria 1 year, Hungary 1 year, Italy 6 months, Austria 6 months, Belgium 6 months, France 6 months, Hungary 1 year, United States 1 year, Great Britain 1 year, Hungary 1 year, India 6 months, Bosnia 6 months, Great Britain 2 years, Turkey 6 months, Chile 16 years, Brazil 6 months, Paraguay 3 years.

In response to my email requesting more information, she did little to clarify her relationship to Finland, saying, "My home country is Chile where I was born and where my family comes from and where I have lived most of my adult life (I have no personal relation to Finland…" I thanked her for her response and noted that Finland had been mentioned in her background survey, to which she replied,

> From a legal point of view, I have three passports: Chilean, Israeli and Finnish. But the latter one is due to holocaust "recompense." My grandfather, as all my maternal family, was from Belarus and was sent to a concentration camp in Poland by Finnish authorities. But that's another story.

For each participant, there were key aspects of their lives that seemed to be forgotten, minimized, or kept secretly away. There seem to be three primary reasons for the selective storytelling: familiarity with the TCKs soundbite, lack of practice, and waiting for the right audience.

When TCKs are asked about their lives, beyond initial introductions, they frequently give their story in a soundbite, three major sentences, or maybe even a Reader's Digest version. However long, it will be concise, informative, and incorporate a wow factor. This drastic reduction of a complicated storyline can require the TCKs to skip major portions of their lives. And these skipped portions might be fascinating and meaningful but just not able to be packaged in a soundbite. So, to some degree, selective storytelling seems to be an unintended impact of a TCK life.

TCKs might also engage in selective storytelling because they are out of practice in simply talking about their childhoods. Anna commented that she is "not able to talk about childhood often." And Valerie's semi-autobiographical book, "B at Home," was written to communicate to TCKs kids, but, because it is "all about me" it also functions as a way of "rephrasing to me" the story of her life. It might be the case that TCKs who interact with other TCKs on a regular basis become more practiced in this process, while TCKs who are less involved in TCKs communities have less practice conversing about their childhoods with similarly experienced others. Simply listing their home and host cultures was exhausting or challenging for several participants because as Jessica explained, "I just haven't thought about it."

TCKs might also choose to selectively tell their stories to particular audiences. As Valerie mentioned, TCK author and speaker Ruth Van Reken often answers the question, "Where are you from?" with "I live in Indianapolis," which is true but deeply incomplete. For audiences looking for a place to physically locate her, that is a complete answer and they are willing to move on. But some audiences have developed ears to listen beyond the words and hear what is not being said. Multiple participants commented on their perception that not many people want the complex life story, so these TCKs seem to wait for a receptive audience before telling a more complete story.

These first two approaches to choice making used by TCKs, negotiating disclosure and selective storytelling, are not new concepts in the communication studies field but rather newly connected to and complicated by a TCK experience. The third choice TCKs seem to make is primarily cognitive but so counterintuitive that communication strategies for explaining it seem of unusual importance.

Choosing Not to Choose. Because they are faced with making decisions among cultural values and practices, some from their home culture and others from their host culture(s), TCKs can develop an identity that seems to be "transcendent of social norms" (Meneses, p. 180). One of these social norms might be the perceived necessity of decision-making.

The interview data seem to suggest that TCKs take various approaches to decision making and that these approaches influence their sense of identity. They might refuse to make the decisions that seem to be culturally necessary but that the TCKs do not want to make. They might make the decision not to decide. They might make the choice not to choose. At times this seems to be a resignation of agency because the TCKs does not value the choice enough to bother to make a decision, and instead leaves it up to the person, group, or culture that is requiring a choice to be made. Many times, however, it seems that TCKs are simply not making a choice and positively accepting what happens.

For Daniel Kevin, a career was not something he pursued but something he sort of fell into.

> [I wasn't told] "work hard and you can be what you want to be." "Go to school and go to college." Those messages weren't really there. […] I never had a time where I said to myself, "I'm going to be this" growing up. "I'm going to be a police officer, I'm going to be an engineer, I'm going to be a…thing." I mean, I *fell*, for lack of a better term, into so many of my positions that other than God's direction and God's mercy, I could be *homeless* today!

And this willingness to be directed by others, fate, or a God is not explained as a character flaw, a cause for regret, or something to change. Rather, these TCKs seem to have made a decision to embrace whatever might come. Much of their life, after all, has been a sort of adventure that has been out of their control.

That is, a choice to accept fate or God's will might also allow some TCKs to accept their childhood lack of agency as similarly fated or meant to be. When looking back on his life, Daniel Kevin refuses to claim agency for his decisions and gives much of the praise/blame to another's actions and directions.

> I think you take what you've learned in your Christian walk, and you learn first about what God has for you. But then you see that just played out in so many practical ways. In terms of ways that God has directed you, or doors that he has opened, or doors that he has closed, whether it's with positions, or relationships, or housing, or whatever it may be, children, health of children. And you see those blessings, and you are hard-pressed to put it upon yourself that "I did this all myself."

It might seem as if he is unwilling or unable to embrace agency in a variety of life choices, but it might not be that simple. The choice not to make a decision seems to be a choice to trust that life, fate, or the deity has something good to give. This is NOT a resignation of choice. This is not a turning over of agency to another human or entity. It seems to require a confidence that the TCKs can rise to the challenge of any adventure the cosmos can create.

The choice not to choose also seems to be an acknowledgment that much of life is beyond a TCKs control, but that that is nothing to fear. For Jimmy, this means not being forced to choose and exert power.

> Well [professionals say] you make decisions based on your life experience. Yeah, that's true, but why? Why do I have to do that? …Do I have to lean so heavily on [my experience] and choose based on what keeps where I'm at? I'm feeling that out, trying to… So identity: here's a big thing about my identity. I'm learning it doesn't have to come from a place of control. It comes from a place of just being myself. And the key to that is knowing that that's enough because I've always thought that I'm not enough.

This choice to not make a decision appears to be tentative and partial, not permanent or complete. A TCK might exert their authority over their own life at any time

without negating their decision not to decide about another aspect or moment of their life. Several participants told of moments during their youth when a parent or other authority figure made a command or restriction, and the TCK clearly and completely rejected that instruction. Sophie refused to limit her friendships: "My parents started to say, 'No, you can't [continue that friendship].' ... I just said, 'Why?… NO! I'm going to still, you know, hang out with them.'" Valerie resisted a move by refusing to learn the language: "And when my parents moved here and I refused to learn French, they sent me to a French camp with the nuns for two weeks. Instead of learning French, I came back with a German boyfriend."

This unconventional approach to life seems to be possible because of a TCK's expectation that they can manage, or at least survive, the uncertainties of life; their lives have likely reinforced this. However, one obvious challenge that can emerge when a TCKs chooses not to decide is deciding how to communicate that choice to others in a way that can be understood and accepted.

For the Christian participants, a common explanation was that the TCK will trust God to guide them; God will open or close doors. Several participants, regardless of religion, framed it more as an openness to life; a contentment wherever life takes them. But apart from religious faith none of the participants expressed clear and culturally palatable phrases that would help them explain their choice not to choose. And every one of the participants expressed their difficulties in communicating life decisions, especially to family and friends.

As we will see in the last section of this chapter, it seems that for these participants to develop and maintain a positive identity it is not essential to be able to

gain support for life choices. They can maintain their positive identities without the understanding and acceptance of others. But their difficulty in making their paths clear and reasonable to others was frequently cited as a hindrance or obstacle to be overcome or set aside in their positive identity maintenance. It stands to reason that these TCKs would encounter less resistance and more support for their positive identities if they had access to explanatory vocabulary.

The absence of existing explanatory language makes this communication strategy less about what these TCKs have modeled, and more about what did not emerge. Perhaps phrases such as “Life is the biggest adventure of all,” or “I can’t wait to see what life/the world/God sends my way today,” or even, “I think I want to be surprised by this” could be beneficial until better and more clear messages arise from the TCK community.

The issue of choice for TCKs is complex. According to the data choice involves adapting to shifting targets and navigating organizational constraints. TCKs seem to negotiate disclosure, selectively storytell, and make culturally questionable choices but struggle to make their decisions and choices understandable and acceptable to others.

Filters

For this study filters refer to the processes by which individuals separate their internal selves and perceptions from the external communication of themselves or others. An individual internally selects in what ways to communicate with others, screening out that which they have chosen to hold back; these filters help us limit what we say and do. Similarly, when an individual receives communication from others they select what to value, believe, or consider, screening out that which they have chosen to block out; filters help us limit what we internalize. This is a seemingly simple concept that can and has

been approached and examined by scholars from a variety of fields. The purpose of this section is not to examine the types or value of filters used by TCKs, but rather to examine how TCKs might perceive the very concept of communication filters.

It seems that some TCKs resist the very notion of holding filters and end up both revealing and internalizing to a potentially unhealthy degree. This is likely connected to the ample anecdotal evidence of oversharing and drastic misunderstandings, as well as overly adaptive chameleon identities. A TCK's perception of filters seems to be built on cultural values, and important overall in holding a positive identity.

To clarify, this use of the term filter should not be connected to the notion of an essentialized self. In keeping with the paradigmatic assumptions that undergird this study, I hold that the self is constructed in a complex and nonlinear process that differs for individuals. There is no "real" self.

Additionally, the use of this term is an demonstration of my axiological commitment to express my understanding of this population in ways that are embraced by themselves. The concept of a filter is a metaphor that fits closely with the data and, when presented to adult TCKs, seemed to connect with their perceptions.

To examine the ways that TCKs might perceive filters systems, this section summarizes relevant aspects of a Third Culture and a specific type of TCK experience. These contributing factors lead into three filter related communication strategies used by TCKs in developing and maintaining a positive identity.

How Filters are Different for TCKs

Appropriate communication is culturally and individually defined. When anyone who incorporates multiple cultural frameworks into their identity and communication,

including an immigrant, refugee, migrant, and so on, enters a context, they face the challenge to change and adapt to the new cultural values by altering the filters of what they express and what they incorporate into themselves.

This is not unique to TCKs, but two cultural components seem to make a difference; their upbringing in a Third Culture and, for some TCKs, the sending organization's purpose and how that purpose is pursued.

Third Culture Context. A Third Culture space is characterized by an openness to consider the "purposes, standards, methods, goals and eventual satisfaction" of others as well as "the mutual development of standards and methods for achieving those ends" and ultimately "represents an expression of mutuality, one which can be understood, supported and defended by all participants who shared in its development" (Casmir, 1999, p. 98). It is a space where amazing and unexpected things can happen between and within individuals.

In this sense, a Third Culture context fosters a reduction or opening up of filters for both what is expressed to others and what is accepted into one's personal framework. An adult entering this Third Culture context might adapt their sense of self and how they interact with others but for a child raised in this, and other cultures, the impact might be more foundational. TCKs might incorporate this desire for mutually open expression and respectful acceptance into their value system. This might help explain why TCKs express deep connections with other TCKs, especially in groups.

Spreading the Good News. Another aspect of a TCK's experience that seems to complicate their perception of filter systems is an organization's mission and methods of pursuing that mission. For TCKs in some organizations, spreading personal information

is part of the process of connecting with potential and current supporters. Missionary prayer letters are serious business, with tangible and eternal repercussions. And a portion of every family's letter contained updates on each child in the family. Their struggles were added to the list of "prayer requests" at the end of each letter. For missionary TCKs on furloughs doing the deputation loop, it could seem as if everyone already had access to their life and knew them intimately.

And this is not out of line with the purpose of this type of organization. If the mission is to preach the Good News and personal information is spread along the way, that's not necessarily a problem. It might be part of the job, even for the TCKs.

Jessica recalled being part of the family newsletters. On deputation Daniel Kevin would "put on a show. It might be Filipino dancing. It might be some start of cultural thing that we brought back from the Philippines. It might be dressing up as native and being paraded out."

But this value of spreading personal information has strict limitations. Anything that was too bad, or that seemed to demonstrate poor character or poor judgment, and did not smoothly support spreading of the good news was not so much filtered as it was denied, silenced, or whisked away. An illness or difficulty adjusting that were suffered because of the mission were acceptable and could be used in supporting the message of the organization. A pregnancy, an addiction of any kind, abuse, physical, mental, spiritual, or sexual, and faith concerns were choices made that might seem to undermine the organizations message, and were not filtered but rather excised from the community or denied acknowledgment. For Jimmy the public message and the private censoring were confusing and made him yearn for "imperfection […] In the high school setting

there might be a girl that got pregnant once and while and she wouldn't disappear. There might be a dorm parents that messed with someone and it wouldn't be hidden. There might be a couple of guys that got into a fight once in a while."

This organizational and mission value of open sharing paired with denial of unflattering information can make it difficult for a TCK to understand, desire, and develop culturally appropriate filters. It can even make it contrary to their fundamental values. They might perceive filters as bad or even unethical.

It also seems that these MKs are learning to embrace the concept of filtering what they will internalize. They are creating filter systems that let certain people impact them deeply but not everyone. Only as an adult has Tammy discovered the value in enacting relational boundaries for self protection. She has learned the value of limiting time with some others in order to be a good friend to them, and at the same time "allowing [other]

Selective Filtering
Or
Village Idiots

"That's what they do in the States and I don't want to be like that!" I was deliberately composing myself in a non-American, non-independent way. I had agency over this choice. I was not choosing not to choose. I was clear.

I will not ignore the offerings of others just because I don't agree.

So I gathered everyone's perspectives of me into my self-concept. Even hostile colleagues were participants in my collaborative/collective identity. If they didn't approve of me, one of us was wrong. I tried like blazes to convince them to see that I actually was not that bad, and possibly even good, but that just backfired.

But not everyone wants to, should, or will inform who I am. Even a village has people on the sidelines, who will never be an elder, a chief, or even be invited to celebrations. Maybe it's wrong. Maybe they have lost that right.

Some people will need to be relegated to the periphery of my identity village, selectively filtered out of my collectively-impacted positive identity.

people to get to know me." Likewise, Jimmy has realized the importance of letting others develop a bit better understanding of him, but, he makes clear, "it has to be the right people."

This can also make communication to others and development of a positive identity problematic. The lack of cultural understanding about what to filter and how might lead to perceptions of oversharing, neediness, and untrustworthiness. The lack of desire or ability to make use of boundaries on internalization might lead to identity confusion and codependent relationships.

The process of filtering external communication and internalization seems to be complicated by their participation in Third Culture spaces, and for some TCKs, a sending organization ethos of spread the good news, even personal details. This might help explain the perception, common among the participants, that missionary kids are the most maladjusted of the TCK categories.

Communication Strategies TCKs Use to Navigate Filter Systems

There are two strategies some TCKs have developed that seem to connect filter systems with a positive identity: collecting mirrors in order to develop external filters and connecting within Third Culture spaces.

Collecting Mirrors to Develop External Filters. To have realistic expectations of others requires a base knowledge of that cultural reality. When entering a new place, TCKs look to feedback from others to understand how they are seen in that context. They use people as mirrors into themselves. This seems to particularly important in situations of communication failure. For example, Daniel Kevin described how a misunderstanding can be both an opportunity to know himself better and to develop intimacy with another.

> For example, if my boss came up to me and said, "I don't like you right now," that's not going to be the end of the conversation. We're going to find out why, what, where, how, how did we get to this place. […] You're going to work through that statement. How did we get to this statement; how did we get to that point? […] Either I'm going to go, "you're incorrect because of this, this, and this," or "I can see where you're coming from with this, this, and this, and this, this, and this is what I'm going to try to do to change this." […] I'm either going to change some things, or I'm going to help my boss see things in a different way. I now have tasks to do; I have projects I need to complete; I have areas that I need to work on. So I am now going to start working on those. Those are more the external things that need to occur.

Daniel Kevin frames this process of developing filters as a conscious mindset. A sort of intellectual, social, and personal adventure. He has an anticipation that if there's a challenge, he will pursue mutual understanding. It is an archaeological dig, so to speak, to find out what occurred in an interaction for the purpose of better adaptation to others and better understanding by others.

The realization that much of this mirroring could be supportive, either initially or after a filter refining process, can be deeply impactful on the development of a positive identity. For Jimmy the discovery that the mirror of the people who love him can reflect back to him a lovely image of himself was crucial in his development of positive identity.

> I find so much more positive identity from others, not necessarily [from] me. It's amazing what people who care about you think about you that you'd never hear. It's just phenomenal. I don't know what the right setting or trigger is for that, but when people care about you and give you [their] perspective on who you are… oh, my gosh. That's … just positive identity for me at this point in my life.

It seems then that learning about cultural perceptions by collecting people who will mirror your communication back to you might give TCKs an external filter that they might have been missing. This is a particular mindset. It's proactively seeking feedback, especially feedback that challenges the TCKs perception of their external reception, and

expecting to arrive at a positive relational and personal space of deeper and more accurate understanding and communication ability.

Connecting Within Third Culture Spaces. One of the cultures that influences TCKs development is, obviously, Third Culture. Additionally, most of the TCK participants have experienced international schools, boarding schools, multinational agencies, organization compounds, international airports, or other Third Culture spaces and expressed a desire for the depth of intimacy they've experienced. Boarding schools can be intensely transparent communities, where the best and worst of humanity might emerge. But it is intimacy, however painful.

When they find such a group, often of other TCKs, they express a sense of relief at having found "my family," or "my people." For example, connecting with other TCKs is important for Valerie:

> Definitely the, that place where you don't need to explain yourself but at the same time everybody's interested and everybody feels a connection and there's a surface, you know, where most social situations you just scratch the surface. The surface is long gone, and you can dive in deep and it feels safe, which is really nice.

Even an international club or a group of foreign students can create a connection. As Sophie recalled,

> [In high school I realized] I cannot become Jewish to try to fit in. I can't fit in. […] And then [I went] to college and then, wow, all sorts of students. But mostly from… clearly well-off families. And I…was not really terribly happy with them. So I sort of became a recluse… Hung out with a few people, mostly international students. So, I felt more and more like "hmmm, it probably has to do with all that traveling!" Probably, it has to do with the fact that I'm Korean. I started to attribute it to that—not many kids have the moving around experience like I do. Not even the international students. The way I related to them was when they were…talking about their own culture. When they were comparing the U.S. to their country. That was the only crowd that would objectify or other-ize, you know, other, the Americans. That was the common ground we had.

This suggests that TCKs might be more apt to have a resilient and stronger identity if they know there's a community somewhere where they can drop some of their filters. There is a desire to be known at a deeper and less filtered level than might otherwise be culturally appropriate.

As fellow TCK researcher, Ellen Beard, put it:

> If we know there are other TCKs or likeminded others around, we can say "these are safe people so I can deal with all of the surface interactions and skin-deep people." There have to be people with whom we can rip off the filter and not be rejected for the rough and raw junk that can get through into our communication and into our identities. (Personal communication, February 7, 2016.)

These communities for the participants included online social networks, local gatherings of similarly experienced others, and periodic large gatherings, such as boarding school reunions and conferences related to globally mobile upbringings. This might help explain why so many TCKs live or work internationally, and the increasing prevalence of second, and even third, generation TCKs.

Positivity

The fourth and final theme that emerged from the data explains several ways in which TCKs might explain the "positive" aspect of their identity. It is not surprising that few participants describes their positive identity as "happy," "productive," or even "not negative." This section will examine three communication strategies that the participants revealed in her explanations of how they develop and maintain their positive identities: framing positivity as both inherent and simultaneously a choice, foregrounding their positivity by contrasting to MKs, and locating appropriate spaces where they can make a positive contribution.

Framing Positivity as Choice

For several participants their positivity was explained throughout their data as a chosen personal quality or characteristic. As Daniel Kevin explained,

> Sometimes I wonder if a positive aspect is something you just have. I think there are some people who are just more negative as you look at things. I can't say, because I can't think the way they think – I don't have their thought processes. But for me, I've always believed that I could do the things that I wanted to, or I only wanted the things that I could. I'm not quite sure which one of those two it is. But, I think that just having that positive outlook was important.

He goes on to explain how and why he has made this character choice.

> I don't frame things automatically in a negative context. And I think if you don't frame things automatically in a negative context you're not going to remember the negative aspects of a situation.

Some participants indicated that this choice was made much earlier in life. For Tammy, the certainty and duration of her positive framing has led to the question of the source of this positivity; she "had a tough upbringing but can't think my parents enough." She has had "so many past positives" that that she is "afraid sometimes that my joy [positive identity] is because of so much good," rather than a chosen response.

For other participants, the agentic choice to frame their lives positively is a new and freeing development. Jimmy and Jessica both explained at length that choosing to positively re-frame their past and present experiences has been a necessary prerequisite for developing and maintaining a positive identity.

Foregrounding Positivity by Contrasting to MKs

The second communication strategy related to TCK positivity was differentiating themselves from those they perceived as negative TCKs. It makes sense that if a TCK who has a strong sense of their own agency witnesses other TCKs expressing their

perceived lack agency in unfiltered monologues, they might distance themselves from TCKs or that version of TCKs. However, the only TCKs group labeled as negative were missionary kids, and the contrast was highlighted by 4 out of the eight participants, including both MKs and other types of TCKs. Daniel explained it clearly,

> I think that there are a lot of instances where, primarily focusing on missionary kids,…I think there are a lot of missionary kids who just don't have a positive, a positive, appearance of themselves or their life…So I frame that question a bit in the sense of missionary kids. I think it's also a little bit of a process in terms of missionary kids as they grow. I'm back 30+ years and so I can certainly say that…and I've been in touch with many missionary kids I knew, and it wasn't always that, it didn't always start out positive. Some start positive and turn negative, some start negative and stay negative, some start negative and turn positive. So, I think when I was answering a lot of your questions, I was framed it in a missionary kid, or third culture kid, framing. So, I would say, yeah. I have a pretty positive outlook for what I've got.

And some of the participants differentiated themselves from negative TCKs because of their concern that the TCK label is used by some TCKs as an excuse for a non-positive self-perception.

> I find very few—no let me take that back—not very few. But I find a lot of, how do I want to phrase this? The TCKs that bring up the fact that they are TCKs usually use it because they are not usually entirely happy with who they are. I've seen it used more as an excuse rather than as a positive aspect. Those in…I have friends that were non-missionary people who lived overseas, and I'm not quite sure why, and I don't have a lot of data. It's more like more of the missionary kids use it as a…as a…not as a "woe is me," but as a "I am not as self-sufficient, I'm not as mentally stable, I'm not as emotionally ground [*sic*], I'm not as successful as I would be or could be because of my TCK aspects. That's usually in the context I see it. I don't have a lot of…and yet, those are the people who bring it up.
>
> The people who are positive don't necessarily bring it up but they would say to you, "Yeah, I'm a TCK, and it was really, really good." But they don't *use* the fact that I was a TCK as the *reason* they were good. They accept that the TCK part was a positive aspect, but they don't say that: "I'm successful because I was a TCK." And, "I'm successful *and* I was a TCK." Whereas people who are on the other end, that are more negative, are going, "I'm not as well-rounded as I could

> be, *because* I was a TCK." At least, that's my perception. As far as whether that's true or not, I haven't done enough *research* or spent enough time, but…

When this perspective is perpetuated within TCK communities, it can lead to the deepening of censorship on TCKs with limited agency and/or filters. Of the participants, over half referred to MKs specifically as negative, stuck in the past, and unwilling to be healthy.

It seems likely that MKs raised in organizations where a lack of agency in the minimization of choice is encouraged would experience more difficulty developing a positive identity then might MKs without that experience, or other types of TCKs.

> We as MKs don't make waves, don't do things that are going to affect your parents work and… positive… so (drums fingers) I was, I, I suppose I was a little confused.

Making a Positive Contribution

The third communication strategy to emerge from the data supports the unsurprising connection between making a positive contribution and positive identity maintenance. Several participants

A Net-Negative Existence
OR
The World is Better Off With Me

I knew I had something to offer. Myself. However much was needed. It was my privilege and my role in life to sacrifice. I also knew that unless I humbled myself, whole cultures could be in infinite pain for eternity.

I knew I was valuable for what I could give, what I could sacrifice, how I could reduce me. Just submit more, need less, give more than I had.

On my value scale the good side was empty, the bad side was full -- all for "the good." A net-negative existence.

Then on Monday I haltingly voiced the words, "The world is better off because I am in it." Then I was quiet and felt strong.

For far too long, I have remained alive not because I enjoyed life and not because I could do great things. I lived because if I didn't that would cause damage. If I ceased to live, others would have to clean up my body, remarry, find a new employee, be sad about my absence for a while. I stayed alive because a change to the status quo would be negative.

I've never considered the possibility that, regardless of the good/bad scale, my simple existence/being could be good.

The existence of Amy is good.
Amy being alive improves life.

That is a positive story I can tell myself about myself.

That reframes my whole life.

related the ways in which they have connected with groups of people who value what TCKs have to offer. Anna helps newcomers to her host country apply for their residency. Tammy is a transition consultant for the missionary kids in her organization.

For Valerie, using her TCK-ness means teaching at her international school and publishing a moving semi-autobiographical book about a young girl and her teddy bear as they navigate a cross-border move.

> And it's also been, it's interesting because I also created this "Moving Booklet" that goes with the book. And it's a handbook for kids who are moving, and our school was great and ordered in bulk, like 200 to give out to kids when they move and everything. But it's been interesting because it's been the *teachers* at this school who have been the hardest sell in a way. Because a lot of them didn't grow up as TCKs, so it's…they don't really…"Eeuw, what are you moaning about? What's the problem?" It's been interesting trying to get across to them that it *is* important for children to go through these transitions and be aware and not have to live with all of this unresolved grief.

As a TCK, Valerie is able to personally understand the struggles of young TCKs, and is able to serve as interpreter between a new generation of kids and the adults who teach them. This has been important in maintaining her positive identity, because she knows that she is making a positive contribution, in a sense making the world a better place for TCKs to live.

In summary, each of the four major themes that emerged from the data is interconnected with the others and in ways that pull, shift, and push the positive identity development of individual TCKs in unique and complex ways. when these themes, agency, choice, filters, and positivity, are considered within the unique context of an individual TCKs experience of mobilities, intercultural contexts, and organizational structures, it is no wonder that there does not seem to be a single, cohesive, one-size-fits-all concept of a TCK positive identity.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the ways in which communication is perceived by TCKs as they develop and maintain a positive identity. The focus of this research is summarized in the Research Question: What communication strategies emerge as salient when TCKs talk about developing and maintaining their positive identity? The multi-method qualitative data included a background survey, online semi-structured interviews, and participant reviews. A modified grounded approach to analysis revealed four significant clusters, or themes, related to communication. This chapter presents a summary of those findings followed by a discussion of theoretical and practical implications of these findings for intercultural communication and for TCK studies. Finally, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are presented.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of data for this project yielded four primary themes: Agency, Choice, Filters, and Positivity (Table 4). Each theme had several subthemes as well as important implications for communication strategies impacting a positive identity. The first theme, Agency, is experienced differently by TCKs because of their Immersion into Unknown Contexts and, for some TCKs, experiences of Being On Your Own. Three important communication strategies of others to TCKs were Increasing Prior Knowledge, Re/Writing Scripts to Include/Exclude TCKs, and Demonstrations of Backing. The second theme, Choice, is experienced differently by TCKs because Shifting Cultural Contexts Create Constantly Moving Targets and Organizational Contexts Constrain Social Choices. Three important communication strategies used by TCKs were

Negotiating Disclosure in Introductions, Selective Storytelling, and Choosing Not to Choose. The third theme, Filters, is experienced differently by TCKs because of their Third Culture Context and, for some TCKs, an organizational ethos that encourages Spreading the Good News. Two important communication strategies used by TCKs were Collecting Mirrors to Develop External Filters and Connecting Within Third Culture Spaces. The final theme, Positivity, is experienced differently by TCKs because of their perception of agency, choice and filter systems. Three important communication strategies used by TCKs were Framing Positivity as Choice, Foregrounding Positivity by Contrasting to MKs, and Making a Positive Contribution.

The first theme, agency, shows up differently for TCKs largely based on their parents' sending organization as well as, for some TCKs, the experience of being on their own at an early age. When a TCK's parent, or another authority figure, actively protects that child from another important adult, that message of legitimacy and value can become a lasting foundation on which a strong sense of agency can be developed. Some sending organizations have clear scripts for their TCKs, which can increase the predictability of expectations and clear boundaries within which independence can thrive. Even when a transition is not up to the child, increasing their preparation and knowledge before a move, and/or familiarizing future friends at the destination about the incoming child, can increase a sense of agency, as well as foster the perception that their presence is anticipated and desired.

The second theme, related to choice, is impacted from the start by a TCK's sense of agency. Add to that the ever-changing myriad choices TCKs make about behaviors, group memberships, cultural and national allegiances, and identity portrayals, and it is

understandable that at times a TCK might experience choice paralysis and be unable to make a choice. They might refuse to choose, not out of paralysis, but because of a socialized acceptance of fate/life learned in a host or home culture, or a developed trust and dependence on the directing will of God.

Table 4
Summary of Findings

Theme	Meaning	How this experience is different for TCKs	What communication strategies contribute to a positive identity
Agency	A TCK's perception of their ability to impact the course of their own life	• Immersion into an Unknown Context • Being On Your Own	• Increasing Prior Knowledge • Re/Writing Scripts to Include/Exclude TCKs • Demonstrations of Backing
Choice	A TCK's perception of available and acceptable options	• Shifting Cultural Contexts Create Moving Targets • Organizational Contexts Constrain Social Choices	• Negotiating Disclosure in Introductions • Selective Storytelling • Choosing Not to Choose
Filters	A TCK's perception of the separation between self and others	• Third Culture Context • Spreading the Good News	• Collecting Mirrors to Develop External Filters • Connecting Within Third Culture Spaces
Positivity	A TCK's perception of the "positive" aspect of their identity	• Agency • Choice • Filters	• Framing Positivity as Choice • Foregrounding Positivity by Contrasting to MKs • Making a Positive Contribution

They might refuse to make decisions that seem to be culturally necessary, which can make them seem lazy, juvenile, and passive-aggressive to others. Developing strategies for negotiating disclosure, including selective storytelling, is one way in which TCKs manage their decision-making in ways that reinforce positive identity. Some TCKs

have developed phrases to use when explaining their decision-making, especially a decision not to decide, to others in a way that is understandable and acceptable.

The third theme, related to internal communication filters, suggests that for some TCKs a positive identity is developed by filtering out what they will incorporate into their sense of self and is maintained by screening what they express to others. For other TCKs, the creation of communication filters is hindered by home or host cultural values of open expression, organizational or cultural reinforcements of collective identity, and/or a perceived lack of agency.

To have realistic expectations of others, as well as knowledge of appropriate communication, a TCK must develop a base understanding of that culture's perceived reality. TCKs can develop an ability to externally/realistically analyze their communication and develop filters by collecting mirrors in each cultural context and by acquiring knowledge of typical TCK experiences.

The final theme, related to perceptions of positivity, reveals three communication strategies used by TCKs in the process of developing a positive identity. TCKs increase the efficacy of their positive identity in three ways: framing both positivity as a choice, foregrounding positivity by contrasting to MKs, and making a positive contribution.

Discussion

With this set of findings in mind this section will discuss several theoretical contributions this study makes to the field of intercultural communication as well as for TCK studies. I will explore three points of contribution to communication studies, with a focus on the most significant contribution of this study, and three contributions to TCK understanding. A discussion of each theoretical contribution will explain how that

contribution extends, interrogates, complicates or bolsters existing theory and/or literature and suggest theoretical and practical applications of that contribution.

Contributions to Intercultural Communication Theory

Though intercultural communication has historically been approached from a Western perspective, this study joins the pursuit of majority-world approaches, albeit by a Western/TCK researcher. Two calls for particular types of research each receive a response from this study. This section ends with a longer discussion on a major contribution of this research; an extension of performance theory that explores the necessity for scripts, especially in the role enactments of particular actors.

Response to Call for Majority-World Explanations of Identity. This study responds to the call for alternative and majority-world approaches to identity (Asante et al., 2014; Martin & Nakayama, 2010) by extending the theoretical dialogue about the nature of identity. Using a dialectic approach this study brought multiple theoretical constructs arising primarily from Western research to the table in an effort to better understand the appropriateness or fit of these theories for a culture that seems, in some ways, to resist Western paradigms (Table 5).

A TCK positive identity is more about negotiating a preferred self than a core or essential self, and more about cohesion of self-concept than a management of multiple identities. This extends the theoretical application of a crystallized identity (Tracy and Trethewey, 2005) in which individuals develop a single, facetted, preferred sense of self. The impact of an organizational context for TCK development of agency, however, complicates the notion an increase in facets is beneficial, and suggest that, if facets are

not chosen by the individual but placed upon them, that might hinder their development of a preferred identity.

The necessity of agency in the development of the crystallized identity might help scholars better understand the challenges faced by individuals within an organizational structure who, under some form of domination, feel unable to choose some facet of their identity. Bullied workers, stigmatized groups, and even "token" or "model" employees might feel unable to reject inflicted aspects of their identity, regardless of the positive or negative valence of the infliction.

Response to Call for Alternate Markers of Difference. This study also responds to the call within intercultural communication for alternate markers of similarity and difference (beyond race, ethnicity, and nationality) and complex ways to explain the intersectionality of these cultural markers (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012). In this study two of the most commonly studied markers of similarity and difference among TCKs, home nation and age at return to the home culture, were found not to be the most significant factors in TCKs developments of a positive identity.

The most significant factors impacting identity developments for TCKs seem to be the ethos of their parents' sending organization, and the regularity or predictability of intercultural transitions, neither of which was anticipated at the beginning of this project. Other important factors included degree of dis/similarity among an individual TCK's cultures, the type of sending organization or the absence of such, and frequency or number of cultural transitions, as well as mother tongue and subsequent languages learned.

Application of these sorts of markers of difference may shed light on how individual experiences of in-between positionality vary beyond the conventional categories of ethnicity, nationality, gender, and age. Co-cultural theory, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism, might benefit from examination of how less visible differences and similarities impact interpersonal interactions in a variety of contexts.

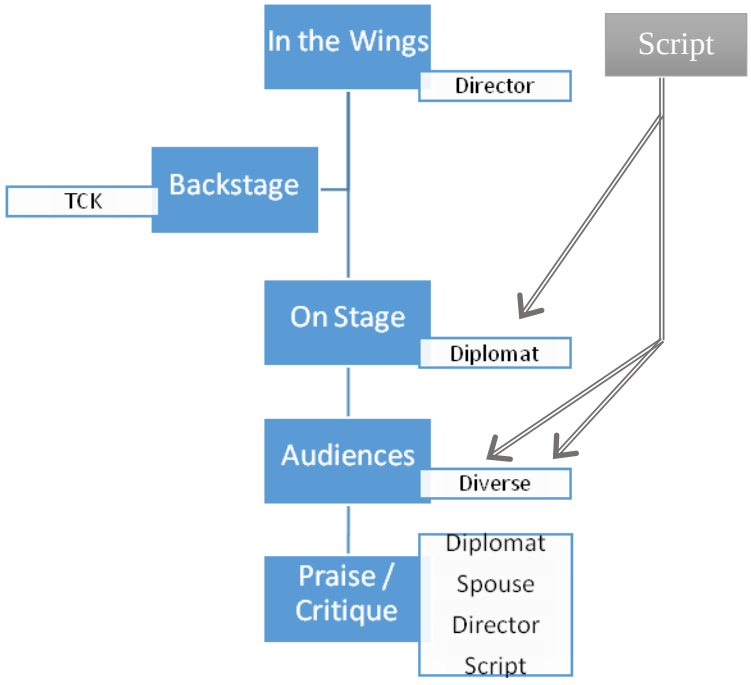
Application to Similar Populations. This study may also be of use to scholars seeking to better understand populations with points of connection to a TCK experience. Refugees, in/voluntary immigrants, domestic TCKs, and families with organizational oversight, as well as other marginal populations might gain new language with which to align or diverge in explaining their experiences and identity.

Performance of Identity Without a Script. For TCKs within some types of sending agencies the process of developing agency is challenged by the absence of information about the role of the TCK. Many TCKs, particularly MKs, might be expected to perform roles with serious, actual consequences. In such situations, interdependence or codependence might be cultivated, rather than independence. This was seen particularly in the experiences of the MK participants, and may have contributed to the difficulty each experienced in the development of a positive identity.

A theoretical framework of performance of self (Goffman, 1959) provides a lens understand the impact of a sending organization on TCK agency. This will demonstrate that agency appears to be connected to an individual's roles, authority to adapt the script, and the potential consequences of their performance. This section examines three types of sending organizations through a performance lens to expose the communication patterns that aid or hinder the development of agency for a TCK.

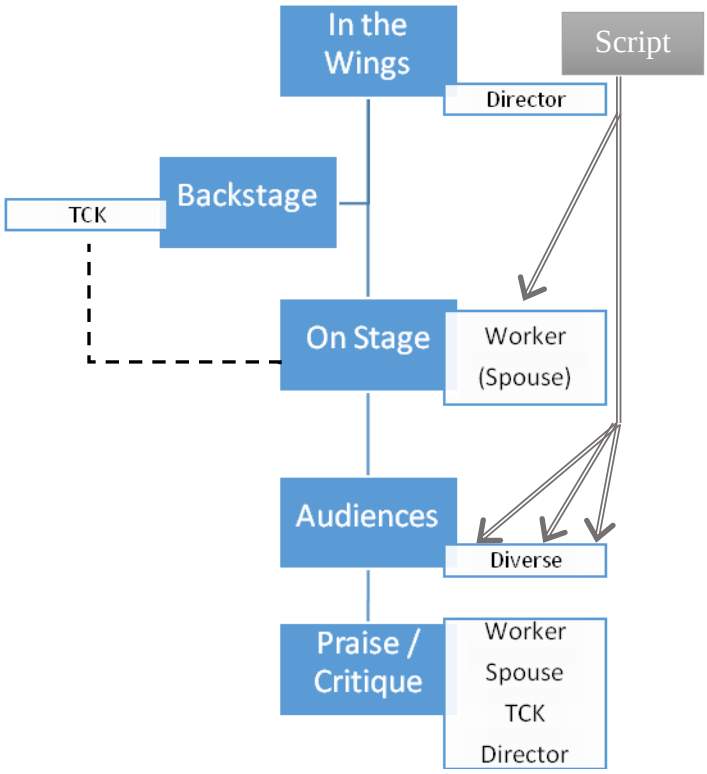
Business or Diplomat TCK. For a diplomat or business expatriate family, the theater might look something like this (see Figure 4): the official worker is the star of the show who follows a script under the direction of the home nation or sending organization. The spouse might play a role as costar or escape the spotlight backstage. Diverse audiences observe the performances and praise/critique the diplomat, the spouse, the script, or the director. Without a major role in the scripts, these TCKs might avoid official and public praise/critique. A sense of agency, then, might flow most easily from culture or family influences and foster independence in positive identity development.

Figure 4
Diplomat/Business TCKs: Independence



Military and Missionary Support Staff TCKs. For military and missionary serving as support staff, the theater might be set up a bit different (see Figure 5). The official worker(s) are the stars of the show who follow scripts under the direction of the home

Figure 5
Military/Missionary Support Staff TCKs: Independence with Critical Cameos

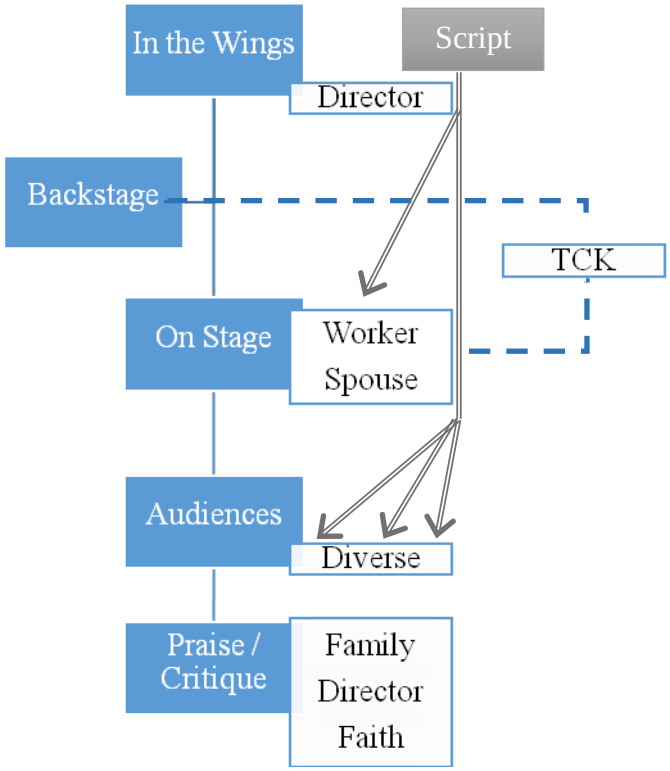


nation or sending organization. The spouse might play a role as costar but is rarely able to escape the spotlight by remaining backstage. Diverse audiences, including the sending military branch, agency, and churches, as well as local communities, observe the performances and praise/critique the worker, the spouse, the script, or the directing nation, organization, or faith. Spouses and TCKs have supporting roles that usually go unnoticed unless there is a problem with the performance. These TCKs might not receive praise for their performance but learn to perform quickly and absolutely to avoid official and public critique of the entire family performance. Their sense of independence, then, might flow most easily from their ability to freely explore life, within clear and established boundaries, but then to snap into character at any time. A full sense of agency

might be challenged by the scripts of "Perform now, ask questions later," "never question a commanding officer/parent," or "march through the pain."

Front-lines Missionary TCKs. For some missionary families on the front-lines of the missionary field, including Bible translators, the entire family is commissioned into service in a sort of total institution (Tracy, 2000). As shown in Figure 6, the official worker(s) is still the primary star of the show and follows scripts under the direction of the home church or sending organization. The spouse likely plays a role as costar. TCKs have supporting roles that might go unnoticed unless there is a problem with the performance. The role of a missionary's kid is rarely written into the script, however, so

Figure 6
Front-lines Missionary TCKs: Unscripted performances in a totalizing institution.



TCKs might be coached into their role by a variety of directors. Their diverse audiences, including the sending organization, agency, and churches, observe the performances and praise/critique the worker, the spouse, the script, the directing nation, organization, or faith, as well as the entire family unit as a package.

These TCKs must translate the script for diverse, and even opposing, audiences, often without the parents present. Critique from key audiences could render the parents' work impossible, unsupported, unconvincing, or otherwise unproductive, as described in Jimmy's narrative. For him, there was a major difference in how children were expected to behave in his home and host cultures. "In both [of my] host countries, it was very important for us children not to create any conflict which might reflect poorly on our parents, sending organization, and God."

These TCKs' sense of independence, then, might flow freely within their mind, where performance is not as apparent, but interdependence or codependence might be the cultivated characteristic. If this role performance is connected to religion or faith, the TCK might sense a potential critic on the deity level and endow their actions with eternal consequence. Unscripted but vital performances by TCKs hinders the development of agency, which, in turn, makes the development of a positive identity more challenging.

This study has potential to impact communication studies, and in particular intercultural communication, in these four areas: expanding explanations of identity, complicating common markers of difference, providing a narrative blueprint for research with similar populations, and the experience of performing identity without a script. In addition, this study contributes to interdisciplinary understandings of the factors that impact TCK identity development.

Contributions to Third Culture Kid Studies and Services

This study presents the experience of identity as a developed and maintained process that is impacted by a) communication to TCKs and b) organizational contexts.

Communication Studies Contributions to Understanding of TCKs. For TCKs, researchers, and their advocates, this study joins the conversation on TCK identity struggles by presenting the concept of a positive identity for TCKs, as well as development and maintenance strategies that connect directly to a TCK experience. This study suggests that understanding and improving communication by, about, and to TCKs has the potential to increase positive perceptions of self.

Table 5
Theoretical Contributions of Communication Constructs of Identity on TCK research

Theoretical Lens	Reveals About TCKs
Interpretive: What scripts might impact TCK roles and performances?	In the scripts of sending organizations, TCK roles might be absent, partial, or totalizing, and clear or unwritten.
Critical: How might TCKs incorporate, resist, or reframe messages of agency or conformity?	Agency might be attributed to a TCK's home culture, stabilizing background, or family characteristic. Challenges to TCKs' agency include cultural transitions, totalizing scripts, absent supports, and collective host cultures.
Cultural: How might TCKs describe themselves in cultural and/or hybrid ways?	TCKs might pursue connections with cultural groups where cross-cultural interactions occur and hybridity is valued.
Dialectical: How might TCKs frame themselves as between or across boundaries?	Decision-making for TCKs might include refusing to choose, and preferring to remain in limbo, between culturally necessary choices.
Positive: What characteristics or values might TCKs value about themselves?	In developing positive identity, TCKs might value the entire package of self, valuing even their negative characteristics.

Identification of the Impacts of TCK Factors on Identity. This study demonstrates the impact of a sending organization on TCK identity. In the past, it has been understood that a sponsoring agency is not important to all TCKs and so studying its relevance to identity was of questionable value (Cottrell, personal communication, March 29, 2016). This study, however, indicates that whether a TCK realizes it or not, the expectations of their parents' sending organization impact that child's development of agency, which has significant long-term impacts on the development and maintenance of a positive identity.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Two limitations of this study should be considered: the mediated nature of the research methods, and the absence of participant representation from the military, a significant type of sending organization. Though data collection by Internet connections increased the breadth and variety of participants, it also limited sensory data to what could be seen and heard. Because identity is deeply personal it is best to be physically near a participant during data gathering to collect rich and nuanced expressions of the ways in which identity is enacted.

Though the data was broad in many ways, and certainly deep, a clear limitation is the absence of military TCK representatives. Representation by military TCKs will be necessary to test the theoretical contribution related to performances with and without scripts. It is likely that a military kid positive identity is developed and maintained in ways similar to other categories of TCKs, but unique facets of that type of experience cannot be identified without those voices.

Several suggestions for future study are prompted by this study. Beyond the need to pursue military TCK perceptions of positive identity, it would be beneficial to conduct a comparison of military and missionary kid experiences with positive identity. Of particular interest is the question of whether patriotism plays a role in the perception and framing of acceptable choices that military TCKs see as available to them.

A second suggestion for future research is an extension of this study; it might be fruitful to examine the ways that TCKs physically express a positive identity. An analysis of TCK living spaces and use of physical culture might reveal additional communication strategies that TCKs use in maintaining a positive identity. The TCK fondness for "sacred objects" has been accepted in the popular writings about TCKs, but an exploration of how TCKs use space and objects for communication and maintenance of positive sense of self would benefit TCKs of all ages. This would also allow a comparison between self-reported identity perspectives and materially expressed identity performances.

Finally, a longitudinal study of the impacts these findings on short- and long-term identity for younger groups of TCKs, including adolescents and young adults, could be theoretically and practically rich.

A final suggestion for future research would be a comparison of first, second, and third generation TCKs, in terms of the messages they received, how their experience was framed, and the long-term impacts on identity and life. The biologically related participants in this study expressed quite different TCK experiences and subsequent framings of positive identity. Deeper exploration of the motivations and intentions of TCKs who parent their own TCKs might lead to richer understandings of the long-term implications of communication practices on the TCK positive identity.

In the end, it should give hope to researchers, TCK advocates, parents, and TCKs alike that it is possible for TCKs, regardless of their circumstances and past, to develop and maintain a positive sense of self. Of the TCKs who endured this long, deeply personal, and multi method research not one had a simple or smooth childhood. For some the journey was layered with additional road bumps, detours, and train wrecks, but the destination is possible for us all. I hope you will join the participants and me as we continue to develop and maintain our individual positive identities.

EPILOGUE

MARGINAL MARGINALITY OR XTREME TCK

It was on a return trip to my village with my husband in 2000 when I learned that I was not alone in my weirdness—I had a tribe. We called ourselves the TI-si-KAYz, and we were everywhere. My whole life was suddenly explainable, even reasonable. I could understand myself, my relationships, my pain, for the first time.

Over the next ten years I gradually realized that this wonderful new tribe didn't explain my whole life. I still could not understand the weirdest bits of me, my relationships, my pain, my psychiatric disorders. Other TI-si-KAYz had supervisors who supported them, partners who valued them, and, this was the toughest, they liked who they were. Of course, there were some like me in the tribe who wanted to fit, to be normal, but to fit means to have a common explanation. We didn't fit even with each other. We were too extreme. An awkward clan.

They say research can be transformative. This study showed me that I am an atypical TCK, with an extreme history, and suddenly, I make sense again. I can embrace my marginal marginality positively.

I am of the Xtreme clan in the TCK tribe. Roar.

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APPENDIX A

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY - INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Benjamin Broome
Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of
480/965-0394
Benjamin.Broome@asu.edu

Dear Benjamin Broome:

On 5/12/2014 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Communication Strategies Impacting Identities of Third Culture Kids Over 40
Investigator:	Benjamin Broome
IRB ID:	STUDY00000988
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Informed Consent - Strategies Impacting TCK Identities 05-09-14, Category: Consent Form; • HRP-503a Protocol - Communicating Identities - 05-09-14, Category: IRB Protocol; • History Form - Strategies Impacting TCK Identities, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Interview Guidelines - Strategies Impacting TCK Identities, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Letter, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/12/2014.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Amy Jung
Amy Jung

APPENDIX B

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY - INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Azusa Pacific University
Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Grants

Exempt Status

DATE: June 13, 2014

TO: Amy Jung

FROM: Joanie Stude, Coordinator, Institutional Review Board

IRB ID NUMBER: #62-14

PROJECT TITLE: Communicative strategies impacting the positive identities of Third Culture Kids over 40: An Intercultural Communication perspective on identity.

Based on the information you have submitted, the project referenced above has been reviewed and declared Exempt from the requirements of the human subject protection regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b).

The determination of Exempt status means that:

- **Further review in the form of filing an annual Renewal form or a Closure report form is not necessary.**
- **Research must be carried out exactly as describe in the application. Additional review is required for *any* modifications to the research procedures.**
- **All protocol deviations, unanticipated or serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB within one week. See the IRB handbook for instructions.**

For assistance please contact the Institutional Review Board Coordinator at jstude@apu.edu or 626.815.2036.

APPENDIX C

TCK EXPERIENCE THEN AND NOW

This chart was created by Ruth Van Reken and filled in by a gathering of MK Caregivers, many of whom were themselves TCKs, and who currently work with the newest generations of TCKs. The last four influences were added by me after conversations with Van Reken and Cottrell. April 2011 MK Caregivers Conference.

Influences on TCK experience	Pre-1980	2013
Culture of origin	Western, 1st world	Increased Eastern and 3rd world cultures
Parents culture(s)	Monocultural or 2nd / 3rd Generation TCKs	Multicultural 2nd & 3rd generation TCKs
Duration of time away from "home" culture	Decades, frequently 4 years at a time	1-5 years
Duration of parent/s' career	Decades, "life's work"	Varies greatly, "short term"
Number of "host" cultures	Usually one culture	Multiple cultures &/or nations
Schooling options	Boarding school or "home" culture without parents	Homeschool, boarding school, international schools, online, International Baccalaureate
Travel between cultures	Transocean ship, railroad,	Airplane, high-speed rail,
Communication Formats (See Cox, 2004)	Postal mail, handwritten or typed, photographs, minimal phone access	Email, Skype, Online Social Networks, Cell phones, Texts, Video,
Labels and resources	MK, Brat, etc. minimal writing on TCK	TCK memoirs, anthologies, fiction, & self-help, Websites, Therapist Lists, TCK Facebook groups, prominent public role models, Int'l school training, Re-entry programs, University status
Global context	Travel abroad was still "exotic" and "dangerous"	More blending of global cultures, even in small town contexts.

APPENDIX D

BACKGROUND SURVEY AND INFORMED CONSENT

Hi there!

I'm Amy Jung, TCK, advocate and researcher. I moved to Ghana when I was seven with my missionary parents and lived in a rural village until transitioning to the States at age seventeen. Since then I have worked, gotten married, had kids and have grown increasingly intrigued by the lingering impact of my time abroad in the pre-internet era.

You got this link because I'd like you to participate with me. I am exploring the ways in which our experiences (and how they were talked about by others), shape our perceptions of ourselves, our surroundings and our place in the world.

This research project is for my dissertation on the impact of messages and milestones on the formation of identity in adulthood. Yes, it's quite a mouthful, but then we are an interesting group, encompassing a vast span of experiences. This topic it is both personally relevant for me and will contribute to the interdisciplinary understanding of TCKs.

If you are **over the age of 40, lived abroad during your developmental years**, and you have a **positive identity**, then your unique perspective can benefit many. I am excited to meet you and I hope that you find as much fulfillment from this process as I anticipate receiving.

But for now, lets start with the basics. This survey will give me the foundational information that will set the scene for our interviews / conversations in the near future.

A Dios,
Amy

----- Page Break -----

Thank you for considering participation in this research project.

Please fill in this sheet of basic information about your history (it takes about 30 minutes). There is no “right” way to fill this out. Please write what you want me to know regarding the “facts” of your early life. You might want to use extra paper, diagram, chart, timeline, draw pictures or leave entire portions blank. Your call. No requirements.

When you see "*your home culture/s)*" answer about the place or places that your parents called home.

When you see "*your host culture/s)*" answer about the place or places that you and your family spent time in other than your home culture/s.

----- Page Break -----

1. What is/was your mother's ethnicity?
2. Her home country?
3. What is/was your father's ethnicity?
4. His home country?
5. Why did your parents move abroad?
6. What was their sending organization?
7. Was either of your parents a Third Culture Kid? If yes, who? What situation?
8. Anything important I've missed so far?
9. Additional Writing Space
10. Where were you born?
11. How old were you when your family first moved away from your *home* culture/s?
12. What year was that?
13. What is the basic overview of where you've lived and during what ages? Include time spent in your*home* culture/s. Or a basic timeline is fine.
14. What was the longest you stayed in your *host* culture(s)?
15. Anything important I've missed so far?
16. Additional Writing Space
17. What transportation systems did your family use to travel between your cultures?
18. What education system(s) formed your schooling?
19. What role did your parents' sending organization play in your *home* culture/s?
20. What role did your parents' sending organization play in your *host* culture/s?
21. How similar were your *host* and *home* cultures in terms of weather and environment?
22. How similar were your *host* and *home* cultures in terms of the language used?
23. How similar were your *host* and *home* cultures in terms of the political systems?
24. How similar were your *host* and *home* cultures in terms of your residence or living space?
25. How similar were your *host* and *home* cultures in terms of what was expected of children?
26. How similar were your *host* and *home* cultures in any other major areas?
27. Anything important I've missed so far?
28. Additional Writing Space
29. Age
30. Sex
31. Currently living in
32. Race/ethnicity/skin-color/continent-of-origin
33. What country or countries do you hold passports from?
    Is your passport current?
34. Current employment status or type of work
35. Have you returned as an adult to the locations/cultures where you lived?
36. Additional Writing Space

----- Page Break -----

INFORMED CONSENT
Strategies Impacting TCK Identities
Amy N. Jung
ASU IRB # STUDY00000988
APU IRB # 62-14

Voluntary Status: You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by the researcher listed above. You are being asked to volunteer since you meet the requirements for enrollment into this study. Your participation is voluntary which means you can choose whether or not you want to participate. You may withdraw any time without penalty. If you decline to continue, any data gathered to that point will be destroyed. If you choose not to participate, there will be no loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Before you can make your decision, you will need to know what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits of being in this study, and what you will have to do in this study. The researcher is going to talk to you about the study, and will give you this consent form to read. You may also decide to discuss it with your family or friends. If you find some of the language difficult to understand, please ask the researcher about this form. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

Purpose: This study is a part of research conducted through Arizona State University and Azusa Pacific University. The purpose of the research is to better understand the ways in which Third Culture Kids (those who lived in a culture different than their "home" during their developmental years) develop and maintain a positive identity. This examination of how messages received at pivotal points can impact identity long-term may increase the understanding of how TCKs shape their identities.

Inclusion Criteria: Participants have self-selected to become involved by responding to a widely distributed screening message. Only Third Culture Kids over the age of 40 with a positive identity will be eligible for inclusion in this study. A Third Culture Kid is defined as an individual who spent at least one year during their developmental years (ages 5-18) in a "host" culture other than their parents' "home," but always with the expectation of return to the "home" culture. This would exclude immigrants, international refugees, international adoptees and others who do not meet these criteria. The definition of "positive identity" will be left to the decision of the potential participant.

Procedure: As a voluntary participant in this study you will be interviewed by Amy Jung. You will have the opportunity to ask questions or discontinue participation at any time.

- Step one will involve completion of a "Background Information" questionnaire, after which Amy Jung will schedule an interview time and location that is comfortable for you.
- Step two is an interview which will take about two hours and will be video recorded. Photographs of your living space will be taken and may include you interacting within your home.
- Step three will be for you to receive a transcript of your interview so you can clarify for the researchers any incomplete explanations or misunderstandings of what you meant.

Possible Risks & Benefits: Participation is voluntary. It is expected that participation in this study will provide you with no more than minimal risk or discomfort which means that you should not experience it as any more troubling than your normal daily life. However, there is always the chance that there are some unexpected risks. The foreseeable risks in this study include discomfort by answering questions that are embarrassing. If you feel uncomfortable or distressed, please tell the researcher and he/she will ask you if you want to continue. Because this is research and does not have anything to do with any current services you are receiving, you can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Personal Release: Part of this research project includes the collection of your stories and perceptions, as well as visual data, which may include photographs and video recordings. I understand that the information I provide will be used to develop a richer understanding of Third Culture Kids and identity, and that it will result in various kinds of publications. I agree to participate in this research and understand that I may be quoted by name or pseudonym in publications and other public presentations. I grant permission for the video recording, audio recording and transcript of the interview to be made available to other scholars, researchers and the public. I realize that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time. This document explains your rights as a research subject. If you have questions regarding your participation in this research study or have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Principal Investigator using the information at the bottom of this form.

Consent: I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand the procedures described above, and I understand fully the rights of a potential subject in a research study involving people as subjects. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

By choosing the affirmative answer below, I agree to participate in this study, be recorded in audio and visual formats, and have my identity used in publication. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Interviewer: Amy N. Jung, Arizona State University, doctoral candidate, ajung@apu.edu
Azusa Pacific University, Assistant Professor, ajung@apu.edu
Principal Investigator: Dr. Benjamin Broome, Arizona State University, benjamin.broome@asu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

37. Do you wish to participate?

- I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study, be recorded in audio and visual formats through Skype, and potentially have my identity used in future publications.
- I do not wish to participate. Delete my answers and personal information.

----- Page Break -----

Thank you for continuing your participation in this study.
Please take a moment to fill out the following information to assist in scheduling your Skype interview/conversation.
I look forward to meeting you!

38. Do you have access to Skype?
39. If yes, what Skype username will you be using? If you do not yet have a Skype address, just let me know and I'll contact you at your email address to get that figured out.
40. When might you be available for a Skype interview/conversation? Generally on:
41. What time zone do you live in, or prefer?
42. At what email address would you like to be contacted?
43. What would you like me to call you during our interviews? (For example, your first name, your nickname, your title and sur name)

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for being willing to participate in my research.

When you completed the online Background Information, you signed an Informed Consent / Personal Release form with information about the purpose of this research and how your contributions will be used. In summary, I am interested in understanding how Third Culture Kids look back on what has shaped their identities, how they see themselves today, and how they communicate "this is who I am" to others. Do you have any questions about this study?

First, let me say, it's been very helpful to have your Background Information.

1. How easy or difficult was it to fill out? Why or Why not?
   Probe: Did you have to ask anyone to get any of the information?
   Probe: Did you look in old records or photos?
   Probe: Did it bring back any memories? Can you describe one?

OVERVIEW QUESTIONS

Let's start with some general, overview questions:

2. What was your family's life like before your family moved abroad?
   Probe: Where did your family live before moving abroad?
   Residence, occupants, extended family, and community…
   Probe: Ages of you and your siblings?
   Probe: Parents work?
3. What were the events leading up to your family's first move abroad?
   Probe: How did your parents talk about the upcoming move?
   Probe: What sorts of activities surrounded your anticipated move?
4. How was the transition explained to you?
   Probe: What did anyone say about you or your move that you still remember?
   Probe: Why do you think they said that?
5. Describe in as much detail as you can the actual process of moving.
   Probe: Colors, sounds, feelings, textures, interactions, smells, anything you remember.

SECTION A

Let's talk about important moments in your life: "Turning points" are moments that shift our understandings of ourselves; times that mark a change in our identity.

Now, I'm going to ask you to think back to some of those turning points in your life. You might only have one or you might have several. Think about each turning point separately until you run out of them or want to move on.

6. What is one turning point you can recall that shifted how you saw yourself or your place in the world?
   Probe: What triggered that turning point?
   Probe: What changed in your understanding of yourself?
   Probe: How old were you?

7. Can you recall another significant turning point when your identity shifted?
   Probe: What triggered that turning point?
   Probe: What changed in your understanding of yourself?
   Probe: How old were you?
   Can you recall another significant turning point when your identity shifted? (Keep going until you are done.)

Thank you.

SECTION B

As we grow up, there are sayings or lessons that stick with us—e.g., things that are told to us over and over again, or maybe just once, but the message sticks with us over time and impacts how we live life. These messages might never have been actually "said" but we got the message anyway. We may even find ourselves repeating or reinforcing these ideas back to ourselves (or to others) years later. If nothing else, it's memorable, and it may have had an impact on the way we lived our life.

Now, I'm going to ask you to think back to some of those memorable messages you've gotten. You might only have one main message or you might have several. Think about each message separately until you run out of them or want to move on.

Consider one memorable message you received about yourself or your place in the world:

8. What was the message, as specifically as you can recall?
9. Who did you get that message from?
   Probe: What can you tell me about that person/people?
   Probe: Why do you think they said/did that?
10. What impact has this message had on you?
    Probe: Has the impact changed over time?
    Consider another memorable message you received about yourself or your place in the world:
11. What was the message, as specifically as you can recall?
12. Who did you get that message from?
    Probe: What can you tell me about that person/people?
    Probe: Why do you think they said/did that?
13. What impact has this message had on you?
    Probe: Has the impact changed over time?
    Can you recall another memorable message you received? (Keep going until you are done.)

Thank you.

I'm going to shift our focus forward in a minute but before I do, is there anything else you want to express about how past turning points or messages have impacted who you are today?

SECTION C

Let's shift our focus from past moments and messages – and fast forward to today.

You're looking at this right now in part because of how you answered one of the Recruitment statements; "I've managed to develop a positive identity." And, I

can't wait to find out what "a positive identity" means to you! I'm not looking for what anyone else thinks...only you.

14. What does it mean for a person to have a "positive identity"? Take your time… Ramble if you need to.
    Probe: How is a "positive identity" an appropriate self-description for you?
    Probe: Does your understanding of your identity as positive change?
15. What makes up your "identity"?
    Probe: Do you have one or more identities? Can you give an example?
16. Does your sense of "who I am" remain the same or change?
    Probe: What or who triggers a change?
17. When someone asked you as a child "who are you" what did you say?
    Prompt: What did this tell people about you? Why did you tell them that?
    Prompt: What did it hide or ignore about you? Why did you not tell them that?

Thank you.

SECTION D

Now, I'd like to better understand how you've come to "develop" this positive identity. We develop our sense of self largely by interacting with individuals and communicating with other people. You've already mentioned some memorable messages you remember that have had a lasting impact on you.

18. Has the concept of "positive identity" been true of you since childhood? How/how not?
19. Considering the first memorable message you described how do you make sense of that in developing a positive identity?
    Prompt: Can you give me an example?
20. Considering the second memorable message you described how do you make sense of that in developing a positive identity?
    Prompt: Can you give me an example?
    (Repeat for remaining memorable messages.)
21. How do you introduce yourself today to people when they ask "who are you?"
    Prompt: What does this tell people about you? Why?
    Prompt: What does it hide or ignore about you? Why?
    How do you respond when people ask, "Where're you from?"

PICK THREE QUESTIONS

22. What stories do you tell about your childhood?
    Prompt: Can you give me an example?
    Prompt: What do these stories tell about you?
23. What metaphors or concepts have been helpful? How?
    Prompt: What metaphors or concepts or labels have not been helpful?
    Prompt: Have any of the following concepts impacted your development of identity? Global Nomad, TCK, MK, Brat, Chameleon, Hybrid, Phoenix, patchwork quilt, mixed bag,
    Prompt: Have these concepts triggered any others?
24. Are any symbols particularly important to your positive identity?
    Prompt: Can you give me an example?
25. Are any activities or services particularly important to your positive identity?
    Prompt: Can you give me an example?
26. What role do other people play in maintaining your positive identity?
    Prompt: Can you give me an example?
    Prompt: What is the impact if they don't play their roles?
27. Do you have a basic phrase or philosophy that guides your positive perspective?
    Prompt: What impact does this have?

Thank you.

I'm going to move us to a couple closing questions but before I do is there anything else you want to express about how you've developed a positive identity?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

This has been incredibly helpful! I just have four final questions that should be quick.

28. How involved are you or have you been with others who grew up abroad?
29. When did you become familiar with the term TCK? Global Nomad?
30. How would you describe to someone close to you what this interview felt like?
    Prompt: During this interview what have you thought or said that has most interesting or surprising to you
31. What would you change about this interview if you were running it?

My goal is to honestly and deeply paint a picture of what your childhood abroad, and all that comes with it, has meant to you, and how it's impacted your life.

Please feel free to add to or clarify the meaning of anything you said, or give an example or…whatever you'd like to add after some thought about this interview.

You are done!

Again, thank you so much for your honesty and depth.

APPENDIX G

GUIDE FOR RECORDING ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Program used:	Purpose of program:
Skype for Windows Desktop	video conferencing
SuperTintin Skype Recorder	recording Skype audio/video
Windows Movie Maker	processing recorded file
NVivo	collecting and analyzing data

Preparing for the interviews:

1. In SuperTintin enter desired preferences, including "Audio: Both" and "Video: Remote Webcam Only."
2. In Skype, enter desired preferences, if any.

Conducing the interview:

1. Open SuperTintin and Skype.
2. On Skype, Locate or type in participant's username.
3. On SuperTintin, click red button to begin recording.
4. On Skype, click video button or "shift-ctrl-R" to connect with participant.
5. On Skype, ensure that video is enabled for both interviewer and participant.
6. Check on SuperTintin to ensure audio and video are both being captured.

After the interview:

1. On Skype, click end call and automatically stop SuperTintin recording.
2. Close Skype.
3. On SuperTintin, right-click on recorded file and select "Open in folder."
4. Close SuperTintin.
5. Open Movie Maker.
6. Drag mp4 file of recorded interview from the open folder into Movie Maker.
7. On Movie Maker, click "File," Save Movie – For Computer." Save as Windows Media File into select desired folder and create new file name.
8. Close Movie Maker.
9. Open NVivo. Drag and drop the new Windows Media File into NVivo Internal Sources (if dialogue boxes open, just click "OK").